

BLACK SWAN  
(Darren Aronofsky, 2010)

Literaire achtergronden



ballerina

gebaar voor gebaar reikt  
ze haar lichaam over aan haar dromen  
en telkens wordt ze meer  
dan ze al was en telkens reikt ze weer.

(Herman De Coninck)

**The Double**  
**A Petersburg Poem**

by Fyodor Dostoevsky

Translated by Constance Garnett

<http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/d/dostoyevsky/d72d/index.html>

**Chapter I**

It was a little before eight o'clock in the morning when Yakov Petrovitch Golyadkin, a titular councillor, woke up from a long sleep. He yawned, stretched, and at last opened his eyes completely. For two minutes, however, he lay in his bed without moving, as though he were not yet quite certain whether he were awake or still asleep, whether all that was going on around him were real and actual, or the continuation of his confused dreams. Very soon, however, Mr. Golyadkin's senses began more clearly and more distinctly to receive their habitual and everyday impressions. The dirty green, smoke-begrimed, dusty walls of his little room, with the mahogany chest of drawers and chairs, the table painted red, the sofa covered with American leather of a reddish colour with little green flowers on it, and the clothes taken off in haste overnight and flung in a crumpled heap on the sofa, looked at him familiarly. At last the damp autumn day, muggy and dirty, peeped into the room through the dingy window pane with such a hostile, sour grimace that Mr. Golyadkin could not possibly doubt that he was not in the land of Nod, but in the city of Petersburg, in his own flat on the fourth storey of a huge block of buildings in Shestilavotchny Street. When he had made this important discovery Mr. Golyadkin nervously closed his eyes, as though regretting his dream and wanting to go back to it for a moment. But a minute later he leapt out of bed at one bound, probably all at once, grasping the idea about which his scattered and wandering thoughts had been revolving. From his bed he ran straight to a little round looking-glass that stood on his chest of drawers. Though the sleepy, short-sighted countenance and rather bald head reflected in the looking-glass were of such an insignificant type that at first sight they would certainly not have attracted particular attention in any one, yet the owner of the countenance was satisfied with all that he saw in the looking-glass. "What a thing it would be," said Mr. Golyadkin in an undertone, "what a thing it would be if I were not up to the mark today, if something were amiss, if some intrusive pimple had made its appearance, or anything else unpleasant had happened; so far, however, there's nothing wrong, so far everything's all right."

Greatly relieved that everything was all right, Mr Golyadkin put the looking-glass back in its place and, although he had nothing on his feet and was still in the attire in which he was accustomed to go to bed, he ran to the little window and with great interest began looking for something in the courtyard, upon which the windows of his flat looked out. Apparently what he was looking for in the yard quite satisfied him too; his face beamed with a self-satisfied smile. Then, after first peeping, however, behind the partition into his valet Petrushka's little room and making sure that Petrushka was not there, he went on tiptoe to the table, opened the drawer in it and, fumbling in the furthest corner of it, he took from under old yellow papers and all sorts of rubbish a shabby green pocket-book, opened it cautiously, and with care and relish peeped into the furthest and most hidden fold of it. Probably the roll of green, grey, blue, red and particoloured notes looked at Golyadkin, too, with approval: with a radiant face he laid the open pocket-book before him and rubbed his hands vigorously in token of the greatest satisfaction. Finally, he took it out — his comforting roll of notes — and, for the hundredth time since the previous day, counted them over, carefully smoothing out every note between his forefinger and his thumb.

"Seven hundred and fifty roubles in notes," he concluded at last, in a half-whisper. "Seven hundred and fifty roubles, a noteworthy sum! It's an agreeable sum," he went on, in a voice weak and trembling with

gratification, as he pinched the roll with his fingers and smiled significantly; "it's a very agreeable sum! A sum agreeable to any one! I should like to see the man to whom that would be a trivial sum! There's no knowing what a man might not do with a sum like that. . . . What's the meaning of it, though?" thought Mr. Golyadkin; "where's Petrushka?" And still in the same attire he peeped behind the partition again. Again there was no sign of Petrushka; and the samovar standing on the floor was beside itself, fuming and raging in solitude, threatening every minute to boil over, hissing and lispings in its mysterious language, to Mr. Golyadkin something like, "Take me, good people, I'm boiling and perfectly ready."

"Damn the fellow," thought Mr. Golyadkin. "That lazy brute might really drive a man out of all patience; where's he dawdling now?"

In just indignation he went out into the hall, which consisted of a little corridor at the end of which was a door into the entry, and saw his servant surrounded by a good-sized group of lackeys of all sorts, a mixed rabble from outside as well as from the flats of the house. Petrushka was telling something, the others were listening. Apparently the subject of the conversation, or the conversation itself, did not please Mr. Golyadkin. He promptly called Petrushka and returned to his room, displeased and even upset. "That beast would sell a man for a halfpenny, and his master before any one," he thought to himself: "and he has sold me, he certainly has. I bet he has sold me for a farthing. Well?"

"They've brought the livery, sir."

"Put it on, and come here."

When he had put on his livery, Petrushka, with a stupid smile on his face, went in to his master. His costume was incredibly strange. He had on a much-worn green livery, with frayed gold braid on it, apparently made for a man a yard taller than Petrushka. In his hand he had a hat trimmed with the same gold braid and with a feather in it, and at his hip hung a footman's sword in a leather sheath. Finally, to complete the picture, Petrushka, who always liked to be in negligé, was barefooted. Mr. Golyadkin looked at Petrushka from all sides and was apparently satisfied. The livery had evidently been hired for some solemn occasion. It might be observed, too, that during his master's inspection Petrushka watched him with strange expectance and with marked curiosity followed every movement he made, which extremely embarrassed Mr. Golyadkin.

"Well, and how about the carriage?"

"The carriage is here too."

"For the whole day?"

"For the whole day. Twenty five roubles."

"And have the boots been sent?"

"Yes."

"Dolt! can't even say, 'yes, sir.' Bring them here."

Expressing his satisfaction that the boots fitted, Mr. Golyadkin asked for his tea, and for water to wash and shave. He shaved with great care and washed as scrupulously, hurriedly sipped his tea and

proceeded to the principal final process of attiring himself: he put on an almost new pair of trousers; then a shirtfront with brass studs, and a very bright and agreeably flowered waistcoat; about his neck he tied a gay, particoloured cravat, and finally drew on his coat, which was also newish and carefully brushed. As he dressed, he more than once looked lovingly at his boots, lifted up first one leg and then the other, admired their shape, kept muttering something to himself, and from time to time made expressive grimaces. Mr. Golyadkin was, however, extremely absent-minded that morning, for he scarcely noticed the little smiles and grimaces made at his expense by Petrushka, who was helping him dress. At last, having arranged everything properly and having finished dressing, Mr. Golyadkin put his pocket-book in his pocket, took a final admiring look at Petrushka, who had put on his boots and was therefore also quite ready, and, noticing that everything was done and that there was nothing left to wait for, he ran hurriedly and fussily out on to the stairs, with a slight throbbing at his heart. The light-blue hired carriage with a crest on it rolled noisily up to the steps. Petrushka, winking to the driver and some of the gaping crowd, helped his master into the carriage; and hardly able to suppress an idiotic laugh, shouted in an unnatural voice: "Off!" jumped up on the footboard, and the whole turnout, clattering and rumbling noisily, rolled into the Nevsky Prospect. As soon as the light-blue carriage dashed out of the gate, Mr. Golyadkin rubbed his hands convulsively and went off into a slow, noiseless chuckle, like a jubilant man who has succeeded in bringing off a splendid performance and is as pleased as Punch with the performance himself. Immediately after his access of gaiety, however, laughter was replaced by a strange and anxious expression on the face of Mr. Golyadkin. Though the weather was damp and muggy, he let down both windows of the carriage and began carefully scrutinizing the passers-by to left and to right, at once assuming a decorous and sedate air when he thought any one was looking at him. At the turning from Liteyny Street into the Nevsky Prospect he was startled by a most unpleasant sensation and, frowning like some poor wretch whose corn has been accidentally trodden on, he huddled with almost panic-stricken haste into the darkest corner of his carriage.

He had seen two of his colleagues, two young clerks serving in the same government department. The young clerks were also, it seemed to Mr. Golyadkin, extremely amazed at meeting their colleague in such a way; one of them, in fact, pointed him out to the other. Mr. Golyadkin even fancied that the other had actually called his name, which, of course, was very unseemly in the street. Our hero concealed himself and did not respond. "The silly youngsters!" he began reflecting to himself. "Why, what is there strange in it? A man in a carriage, a man needs to be in a carriage, and so he hires a carriage. They're simply noodles! I know them — simply silly youngsters, who still need thrashing! They want to be paid a salary for playing pitch-farthing and dawdling about, that's all they're fit for. It'd let them all know, if only . . ."

Mr. Golyadkin broke off suddenly, petrified. A smart pair of Kazan horses, very familiar to Mr. Golyadkin, in a fashionable droshky, drove rapidly by on the right side of his carriage. The gentleman sitting in the droshky, happening to catch a glimpse of Mr. Golyadkin, who was rather incautiously poking his head out of the carriage window, also appeared to be extremely astonished at the unexpected meeting and, bending out as far as he could, looked with the greatest of curiosity and interest into the corner of the carriage in which our hero made haste to conceal himself. The gentleman in the droshky was Andrey Filippovitch, the head of the office in which Mr. Golyadkin served in the capacity of assistant to the chief clerk. Mr. Golyadkin, seeing that Andrey Filippovitch recognized him, that he was looking at him open-eyed and that it was impossible to hide, blushed up to his ears.

"Bow or not? Call back or not? Recognize him or not?" our hero wondered in indescribable anguish, "or pretend that I am not myself, but somebody else strikingly like me, and look as though nothing were the matter. Simply not I, not I — and that's all," said Mr. Golyadkin, taking off his hat to Andrey Filippovitch and keeping his eyes fixed upon him. "I'm . . . I'm all right," he whispered with an effort; "I'm . . . quite all right. It's not I, it's not I — and that is the fact of the matter."

Soon, however, the droshky passed the carriage, and the magnetism of his chief's eyes was at an end. Yet he went on blushing, smiling and muttering something to himself. . .

"I was a fool not to call back," he thought at last. "I ought to have taken a bolder line and behaved with gentlemanly openness. I ought to have said 'This is how it is, Andrey Filippovitch, I'm asked to the dinner too,' and that's all it is!"

Then, suddenly recalling how taken aback he had been, our hero flushed as hot as fire, frowned, and cast a terrible defiant glance at the front corner of the carriage, a glance calculated to reduce all his foes to ashes. At last, he was suddenly inspired to pull the cord attached to the driver's elbow, and stopped the carriage, telling him to drive back to Liteyny Street. The fact was, it was urgently necessary for Mr. Golyadkin, probably for the sake of his own peace of mind, to say something very interesting to his doctor, Krestyan Ivanovitch. And, though he had made Krestyan Ivanovitch's acquaintance quite recently, having, indeed, only paid him a single visit, and that one the previous week, to consult him about some symptom. but a doctor, as they say, is like a priest, and it would be stupid for him to keep out of sight, and, indeed, it was his duty to know his patients. "Will it be all right, though," our hero went on, getting out of the carriage at the door of a five-storey house in Liteyny Street, at which he had told the driver to stop the carriage: "Will it be all right? Will it be proper? Will it be appropriate? After all, though," he went on, thinking as he mounted the stairs out of breath and trying to suppress that beating of his heart, which had the habit of beating on all other people's staircases: "After all, it's on my own business and there's nothing reprehensible in it. . . . It would be stupid to keep out of sight. Why, of course, I shall behave as though I were quite all right, and have simply looked in as I passed. . . . He will see, that it's all just as it should be."

Reasoning like this, Mr. Golyadkin mounted to the second storey and stopped before flat number five, on which there was a handsome brass door-plate with the inscription —

KRESTYAN IVANOVITCH RUTENSPITZ Doctor of Medicine and Surgery

Stopping at the door, our hero made haste to assume an air of propriety, ease, and even of a certain affability, and prepared to pull the bell. As he was about to do so he promptly and rather appropriately reflected that it might be better to come to-morrow, and that it was not very pressing for the moment. But as he suddenly heard footsteps on the stairs, he immediately changed his mind again and at once rang Krestyan Ivanovitch's bell — with an air, moreover, of great determination.

## Chapter 2

The doctor of medicine and surgery, Krestyan Ivanovitch Rutenspitz, a very hale though elderly man, with thick eyebrows and whiskers that were beginning to turn grey, eyes with an expressive gleam in them that looked capable of routing every disease, and, lastly, with orders of some distinction on his breast, was sitting in his consulting-room that morning in his comfortable armchair. He was drinking coffee, which his wife had brought him with her own hand, smoking a cigar and from time to time writing prescriptions for his patients. After prescribing a draught for an old man who was suffering from haemorrhoids and seeing the aged patient out by the side door, Krestyan Ivanovitch sat down to await the next visitor.

Mr. Golyadkin walked in.

Apparently Krestyan Ivanovitch did not in the least expect nor desire to see Mr. Golyadkin, for he was suddenly taken aback for a moment, and his countenance unconsciously assumed a strange and, one may

almost say, a displeased expression. As Mr. Golyadkin almost always turned up inappropriately and was thrown into confusion whenever he approached any one about his own little affairs, on this occasion, too, he was desperately embarrassed. Having neglected to get ready his first sentence, which was invariably a stumbling-block for him on such occasions, he muttered something — apparently an apology — and, not knowing what to do next, took a chair and sat down, but, realizing that he had sat down without being asked to do so, he was immediately conscious of his lapse, and made haste to efface his offence against etiquette and good breeding by promptly getting up again from the seat he had taken uninvited. Then, on second thoughts, dimly perceiving that he had committed two stupid blunders at once, he immediately decided to commit a third — that is, tried to right himself, muttered something, smiled, blushed, was overcome with embarrassment, sank into expressive silence, and finally sat down for good and did not get up again. Only, to protect himself from all contingencies, he looked at the doctor with that defiant glare which had an extraordinary power of figuratively crushing Mr. Golyadkin's enemies and reducing them to ashes. This glance, moreover, expressed to the full Mr. Golyadkin's independence — that is, to speak plainly, the fact that Mr. Golyadkin was "all right," that he was "quite himself, like everybody else," and that there was "nothing wrong in his upper storey." Krestyan Ivanovitch coughed, cleared his throat, apparently in token of approval and assent to all this, and bent an inquisitorial interrogative gaze upon his visitor.

"I have come to trouble you a second time, Krestyan Ivanovitch," began Mr. Golyadkin, with a smile, "and now I venture to ask your indulgence a second time . . ." He was obviously at a loss for words.

"H'm . . . Yes!" pronounced Krestyan Ivanovitch, puffing out a spiral of smoke and putting down his cigar on the table, "but you must follow the treatment prescribed to you; I explained to you that what would be beneficial to your health is a change of habits. . . . Entertainment, for instance, and, well, friends — you should visit your acquaintances, and not be hostile to the bottle; and likewise keep cheerful company."

Mr. Golyadkin, still smiling, hastened to observe that he thought he was like every one else, that he lived by himself, that he had entertainments like every one else . . . that, of course, he might go to the theatre, for he had the means like every one else, that he spent the day at the office and the evenings at home, that he was quite all right; he even observed, in passing, that he was, so far as he could see, as good as any one, that he lived at home, and finally, that he had Petrushka. At this point Mr. Golyadkin hesitated.

"H'm! no, that is not the order of proceeding that I want; and that is not at all what I would ask you. I am interested to know, in general, are you a great lover of cheerful company? Do you take advantages of festive occasions; and well, do you lead a melancholy or cheerful manner of life?"

"Krestyan Ivanovitch, I . . ."

"H'm! . . . I tell you," interrupted the doctor, "that you must have a radical change of life, must, in a certain sense, break in your character." (Krestyan Ivanovitch laid special stress on the word "break in," and paused for a moment with a very significant air.) "Must not shrink from gaiety, must visit entertainments and clubs, and in any case, be not hostile to the bottle. Sitting at home is not right for you . . . sitting at home is impossible for you."

"I like quiet, Krestyan Ivanovitch," said Mr. Golyadkin, with a significant look at the doctor and evidently seeking words to express his ideas more successfully: "In my flat there's only me and Petrushka. . . . I mean my man, Krestyan Ivanovitch. I mean to say, Krestyan Ivanovitch, that I go my way, my own way, Krestyan Ivanovitch. I keep myself to myself, and so far as I can see am not dependent on any one. I go out for walks, too, Krestyan Ivanovitch."

"What? Yes! well, nowadays there's nothing agreeable in walking: the climate's extremely bad."

"Quite so, Krestyan Ivanovitch. Though I'm a peaceable man, Krestyan Ivanovitch, as I've had the honour of explaining to you already, yet my way lies apart, Krestyan Ivanovitch. The ways of life are manifold . . . I mean . . . I mean to say, Krestyan Ivanovitch. . . . Excuse me, Krestyan Ivanovitch, I've no great gift for eloquent speaking."

"H'm . . . you say . . ."

"I say, you must excuse me, Krestyan Ivanovitch, that as far as I can see I am no great hand at eloquence in speaking," Mr. Golyadkin articulated, stammering and hesitating, in a half-aggrieved voice. "In that respect, Krestyan Ivanovitch, I'm not quite like other people," he added, with a peculiar smile, "I can't talk much, and have never learnt to embellish my speech with literary graces. On the other hand, I act, Krestyan Ivanovitch; on the other hand, I act, Krestyan Ivanovitch."

"H'm . . . How's that . . . you act?" responded Krestyan Ivanovitch.

Then silence followed for half a minute. The doctor looked somewhat strangely and mistrustfully at his visitor. Mr. Golyadkin, for his part, too, stole a rather mistrustful glance at the doctor.

"Krestyan Ivanovitch," he began, going on again in the same tone as before, somewhat irritated and puzzled by the doctor's extreme obstinacy: "I like tranquillity and not the noisy gaiety of the world. Among them, I mean, in the noisy world, Krestyan Ivanovitch one must be able to polish the floor with one's boots . . ." (here Mr. Golyadkin made a slight scrape on the floor with his toe); "they expect it, and they expect puns too . . . one must know how to make a perfumed compliment . . . that's what they expect there. And I've not learnt to do it, Krestyan Ivanovitch, I've never learnt all those tricks, I've never had the time. I'm a simple person, and not ingenious, and I've no external polish. On that side I surrender, Krestyan Ivanovitch, I lay down my arms, speaking in that sense."

All this Mr. Golyadkin pronounced with an air which made it perfectly clear that our hero was far from regretting that he was laying down his arms in that sense and that he had not learnt these tricks; quite the contrary, indeed. As Krestyan Ivanovitch listened to him, he looked down with a very unpleasant grimace on his face, seeming to have a presentiment of something. Mr. Golyadkin's tirade was followed by a rather long and significant silence.

"You have, I think, departed a little from the subject," Krestyan Ivanovitch said at last, in a low voice: "I confess I cannot altogether understand you."

"I'm not a great hand at eloquent speaking, Krestyan Ivanovitch; I've had the honour to inform you, Krestyan Ivanovitch, already," said Mr. Golyadkin, speaking this time in a sharp and resolute tone.

"H'm!" . . .

"Krestyan Ivanovitch!" began Mr. Golyadkin again in a low but more significant voice in a somewhat solemn style and emphasizing every point: "Krestyan Ivanovitch, when I came in here I began with apologies. I repeat the same thing again, and again ask for your indulgence. There's no need for me to conceal it, Krestyan Ivanovitch. I'm an unimportant man, as you know; but fortunately for me, I do not regret being an unimportant man. Quite the contrary, indeed, Krestyan Ivanovitch, and, to be perfectly frank, I'm proud that I'm not a great man but an unimportant man. I'm not one to intrigue and I'm proud of that too, I don't act on the sly, but openly, without cunning, and although I could do harm

too, and a great deal of harm, indeed, and know to whom and how to do it, Krestyan Ivanovitch, yet I won't sully myself, and in that sense I wash my hands. In that sense, I say, I wash them, Krestyan Ivanovitch!" Mr. Golyadkin paused expressively for a moment; he spoke with mild fervour.

"I set to work, Krestyan Ivanovitch," our hero continued, "directly, openly, by no devious ways, for I disdain them, and leave them to others. I do not try to degrade those who are perhaps purer than you and I . . . that is, I mean, I and they, Krestyan Ivanovitch — I didn't mean you. I don't like insinuations; I've no taste for contemptible duplicity; I'm disgusted by slander and calumny. I only put on a mask at a masquerade, and don't wear one before people every day. I only ask you, Krestyan Ivanovitch, how you would revenge yourself upon your enemy, your most malignant enemy — the one you would consider such?" Mr. Golyadkin concluded with a challenging glance at Krestyan Ivanovitch.

Though Mr. Golyadkin pronounced this with the utmost distinctness and clearness, weighing his words with a self-confident air and reckoning on their probable effect, yet meanwhile he looked at Krestyan Ivanovitch with anxiety, with great anxiety, with extreme anxiety. Now he was all eyes: and timidly waited for the doctor's answer with irritable and agonized impatience. But to the perplexity and complete amazement of our hero, Krestyan Ivanovitch only muttered something to himself; then he moved his armchair up to the table, and rather drily though politely announced something to the effect that his time was precious, and that he did not quite understand; that he was ready, however, to attend to him as far as he was able, but he would not go into anything further that did not concern him. At this point he took the pen, drew a piece of paper towards him, cut out of it the usual long strip, and announced that he would immediately prescribe what was necessary.

"No, it's not necessary, Krestyan Ivanovitch! No, that's not necessary at all!" said Mr. Golyadkin, getting up from his seat, and clutching Krestyan Ivanovitch's right hand. "That isn't what's wanted, Krestyan Ivanovitch."

And, while he said this, a queer change came over him. His grey eyes gleamed strangely, his lips began to quiver, all the muscles, all the features of his face began moving and working. He was trembling all over. After stopping the doctor's hand, Mr. Golyadkin followed his first movement by standing motionless, as though he had no confidence in himself and were waiting for some inspiration for further action.

Then followed a rather strange scene.

Somewhat perplexed, Krestyan Ivanovitch seemed for a moment rooted to his chair and gazed open-eyed in bewilderment at Mr. Golyadkin, who looked at him in exactly the same way. At last Krestyan Ivanovitch stood up, gently holding the lining of Mr. Golyadkin's coat. For some seconds they both stood like that, motionless, with their eyes fixed on each other. Then, however, in an extraordinarily strange way came Mr. Golyadkin's second movement. His lips trembled, his chin began twitching, and our hero quite unexpectedly burst into tears. Sobbing, shaking his head and striking himself on the chest with his right hand, while with his left clutching the lining of the doctor's coat, he tried to say something and to make some explanation but could not utter a word.

At last Krestyan Ivanovitch recovered from his amazement.

"Come, calm yourself!" he brought out at last, trying to make Mr. Golyadkin sit down in an armchair.

"I have enemies, Krestyan Ivanovitch, I have enemies; I have malignant enemies who have sworn to ruin me . . ." Mr. Golyadkin answered in a frightened whisper.



"Come, come, why enemies? you mustn't talk about enemies! You really mustn't. Sit down, sit down," Krestyan Ivanovitch went on, getting Mr. Golyadkin once and for all into the armchair.

Mr. Golyadkin sat down at last, still keeping his eyes fixed on the doctor. With an extremely displeased air, Krestyan Ivanovitch strode from one end of the room to another. A long silence followed.

"I'm grateful to you, Krestyan Ivanovitch, I'm very grateful, and I'm very sensible of all you've done for me now. To my dying day I shall never forget your kindness, Krestyan Ivanovitch," said Mr. Golyadkin, getting up from his seat with an offended air.

"Come, give over! I tell you, give over!" Krestyan Ivanovitch responded rather sternly to Mr. Golyadkin's outburst, making him sit down again.

"Well, what's the matter? Tell me what is unpleasant," Krestyan Ivanovitch went on, "and what enemies are you talking about? What is wrong?"

"No, Krestyan Ivanovitch we'd better leave that now," answered Mr. Golyadkin, casting down his eyes; "let us put all that aside for the time. . . . Till another time, Krestyan Ivanovitch, till a more convenient moment, when everything will be discovered and the mask falls off certain faces, and something comes to light. But, meanwhile, now, of course, after what has passed between us . . . you will agree yourself, Krestyan Ivanovitch. . . . Allow me to wish you good morning, Krestyan Ivanovitch," said Mr. Golyadkin, getting up gravely and resolutely and taking his hat.

"Oh, well . . . as you like . . . h'm . . ." (A moment of silence followed.) "For my part, you know . . . whatever I can do . . . and I sincerely wish you well."

"I understand you, Krestyan Ivanovitch, I understand: I understand you perfectly now . . . In any case excuse me for having troubled you, Krestyan Ivanovitch."

"H'm, no, I didn't mean that. However, as you please; go on taking the medicines as before . . . ."

"I will go with the medicines as you say, Krestyan Ivanovitch. I will go on with them, and I will get them at the same chemist's . . . To be a chemist nowadays, Krestyan Ivanovitch, is an important business . . . ."

"How so? In what sense do you mean?"

"In a very ordinary sense, Krestyan Ivanovitch. I mean to say that nowadays that's the way of the world. . . ."

"H'm. . ."

"And that every silly youngster, not only a chemist's boy turns up his nose at respectable people."

"H'm. How do you understand that?"

"I'm speaking of a certain person, Krestyan Ivanovitch . . . of a common acquaintance of ours, Krestyan Ivanovitch, of Vladimir Semyonovitch . . ."

"Ah!"

"Yes, Krestyan Ivanovitch: and I know certain people, Krestyan Ivanovitch, who didn't keep to the general rule of telling the truth, sometimes."

"Ah! How so?"

"Why, yes, it is so: but that's neither here nor there: they sometimes manage to serve you up a fine egg in gravy."

"What? Serve up what?"

"An egg in gravy, Krestyan Ivanovitch. It's a Russian saying. They know how to congratulate some one the right moment, for instance; there are people like that."

"Congratulate?"

"yes, congratulate, Krestyan Ivanovitch, as some one I know very well did the other day!" . . .

"Some one you know very well . . . Ah! how was that?" said Krestyan Ivanovitch, looking attentively at Mr. Golyadkin.

"Yes, some one I know very well indeed congratulated some one else I know very well — and, what's more, a comrade, a friend of his heart, on his promotion, on his receiving the rank of assessor. This was how it happened to come up: 'I am exceedingly glad of the opportunity to offer you, Vladimir Semyonovitch, my congratulations, my sincere congratulations, on your receiving the rank of assessor. And I'm the more pleased, as all the world knows that there are old women nowadays who tell fortunes.'"

At this point Mr. Golyadkin gave a sly nod, and screwing up his eyes, looked at Krestyan Ivanovitch . . .

"H'm. So he said that . . ."

"He did, Krestyan Ivanovitch, he said it and glanced at once at Andrey Filippovitch, the uncle of our Prince Charming, Vladimir Semyonovitch. But what is it to me, Krestyan Ivanovitch, that he has been made an assessor? What is it to me? And he wants to get married and the milk is scarcely dry on his lips, if I may be allowed the expression. And I said as much. Vladimir Semyonovitch, said I! I've said everything now; allow me to withdraw."

"H'm . . ."

"Yes, Krestyan Ivanovitch, all me now, I say, to withdraw. But, to kill two birds with one stone, as I twitted our young gentleman with the old women, I turned to Klara Olsufyevna (it all happened the same day, before yesterday at Olsufy Ivanovitch's), and she had only just sung a song with feeling, 'You've sung songs of feeling, madam,' said I, 'but they've not been listened to with a pure heart.' And by that I hinted plainly, Krestyan Ivanovitch, hinted plainly, that they were not running after her now, but looking higher . . ."

"Ah! And what did he say?"

"He swallowed the pill, Krestyan Ivanovitch, as the saying is."

"H'm . . ."

"Yes, Krestyan Ivanovitch. To the old man himself, too, I said, 'Olsufy Ivanovitch,' said I, 'I know how much I'm indebted to you, I appreciate to the full all the kindness you've showered upon me from my childhood up. But open your eyes, Olsufy Ivanovitch,' I said. 'Look about you. I myself do things openly and aboveboard, Olsufy Ivanovitch.'"

"Oh, really!"

"Yes, Krestyan Ivanovitch. Really . . ."

"What did he say?"

"Yes, what, indeed, Krestyan Ivanovitch? He mumbled one thing and another, and 'I know you,' and that 'his Excellency was a benevolent man' — he rambled on . . . But, there, you know! he's begun to be a bit shaky, as they say, with old age."

"Ah! So that's how it is now . . ."

"Yes, Krestyan Ivanovitch. And that's how we all are! Poor old man! He looks towards the grave, breathes incense, as they say, while they concoct a piece of womanish gossip and he listens to it; without him they wouldn't . . ."

"Gossip, you say?"

"Yes, Krestyan Ivanovitch, they've concocted a womanish scandal. Our bear, too, had a finger in it, and his nephew, our Prince Charming. They've joined hands with the old women and, of course, they've concocted the affair. Would you believe it? They plotted the murder of some one! . . ."

"The murder of some one?"

"Yes, Krestyan Ivanovitch, the moral murder of some one. They spread about . . . I'm speaking of a man I know very well."

Krestyan Ivanovitch nodded.

"They spread rumours about him . . . I confess I'm ashamed to repeat them, Krestyan Ivanovitch."

"H'm." . . .

"They spread a rumour that he had signed a promise to marry though he was already engaged in another quarter . . . and would you believe it, Krestyan Ivanovitch, to whom?"

"Really?"

"To a cook, to a disreputable German woman from whom he used to get his dinners; instead of paying what he owed, he offered her his hand."

"Is that what they say?"

"Would you believe it, Krestyan Ivanovitch? A low German, a nasty shameless German, Karolina Ivanovna, if you know . . ."

"I confess, for my part . . ."

"I understand you, Krestyan Ivanovitch, I understand, and for my part I feel it . . ."

"Tell me, please, where are you living now?"

"Where am I living now, Krestyan Ivanovitch?"

"Yes . . . I want . . . I believe you used to live . . ."

"Yes, Krestyan Ivanovitch, I did, I used to. To be sure I lived!" answered Mr. Golyadkin, accompanying his words with a little laugh, and somewhat disconcerting Krestyan Ivanovitch by his answer.

"No, you misunderstood me; I meant to say . . ."

"I, too, meant to say, Krestyan Ivanovitch, I meant it too," Mr. Golyadkin continued, laughing. "But I've kept you far too long, Krestyan Ivanovitch. I hope you will allow me now, to wish you good morning."

"H'm . . ."

"Yes, Krestyan Ivanovitch, I understand you; I fully understand you now," said our hero, with a slight flourish before Krestyan Ivanovitch. "And so permit me to wish you good morning . . ."

At this point our hero made a scraping with the toe of his boot and walked out of the room, leaving Krestyan Ivanovitch in the utmost amazement. As he went down the doctor's stairs he smiled and rubbed his hands gleefully. On the steps, breathing the fresh air and feeling himself at liberty, he was certainly prepared to admit that he was the happiest of mortals, and thereupon to go straight to his office — when suddenly his carriage rumbled up to the door: he glanced at it and remembered everything. Petrushka was already opening the carriage door. Mr. Golyadkin was completely overwhelmed by a strong and unpleasant sensation. He blushed, as it were, for a moment. Something seemed to stab him. He was just about to raise his foot to the carriage step when he suddenly turned round and looked towards Krestyan Ivanovitch's window. Yes, it was so! Krestyan Ivanovitch was standing at the window, was stroking his whiskers with his right hand and staring with some curiosity at the hero of our story.

"That doctor is silly," thought Mr. Golyadkin, huddling out of sight in the carriage; "extremely silly. He may treat his patients all right, but still . . . he's as stupid as a post."

Mr. Golyadkin sat down, Petrushka shouted "Off!" and the carriage rolled towards Nevsky Prospect again.

### Chapter 3

All that morning was spent by Mr. Golyadkin in a strange bustle of activity. On reaching the Nevsky Prospect our hero told the driver to stop at the bazaar. Skipping out of his carriage, he ran to the Arcade, accompanied by Petrushka, and went straight to a shop where gold and silver articles were for

sale. One could see from his very air that he was overwhelmed with business and had a terrible amount to do. Arranging to purchase a complete dinner — and tea-service for fifteen hundred roubles and including in the bargain for that sum a cigar-case of ingenious form and a silver shaving-set, and finally, asking the price of some other articles, useful and agreeable in their own way, he ended by promising to come without fail next day, or to send for his purchases the same day. He took the number of the shop, and listening attentively to the shopkeeper, who was very pressing for a small deposit, said that he should have it all in good time. After which he took leave of the amazed shopkeeper and, followed by a regular flock of shopmen, walked along the Arcade, continually looking round at Petrushka and diligently seeking our fresh shops. On the way he dropped into a money-changer's and changed all his big notes into small ones, and though he lost on the exchange, his pocket-book was considerably fatter, which evidently afforded him extreme satisfaction. Finally, he stopped at a shop for ladies' dress materials. Here, too, after deciding to purchase good for a considerable sum, Mr. Golyadkin promised to come again, took the number of the shop and, on being asked for a deposit, assured the shopkeeper that "he should have a deposit too, all in good time." Then he visited several other shops, making purchases in each of them, asked the price of various things, sometimes arguing a long time with the shopkeeper, going out of the shop and returning two or three times — in fact he displayed exceptional activity. From the Arcade our hero went to a well-known furniture shop, where he ordered furniture for six rooms; he admired a fashionable and very toilet table for ladies' use in the latest style, and, assuring the shopkeeper that he would certainly send for all these things, walked out of the shop, as usual promising a deposit. then he went off somewhere else and ordered something more. In short, there seemed to be no end to the business he had to get through. At last, Mr. Golyadkin seemed to grow heartily sick of it all, and he began, goodness knows why, to be tormented by the stings of conscience. Nothing would have induced him now, for instance, to meet Andrey Filippovitch, or even Krestyan Ivanovitch.

At last, the town clock struck three. When Mr. Golyadkin finally took his seat in the carriage, of all the purchases he had made that morning he had, it appeared, in reality only got a pair of gloves and a bottle of scent, that cost a rouble and a half. As it was still rather early, he ordered his coachman to stop near a well-known restaurant in Nevsky Prospect which he only knew by reputation, got out of the carriage, and hurried in to have a light lunch, to rest and to wait for the hour fixed for the dinner.

Lunching as a man lunches who has the prospect before him of going out to a sumptuous dinner, that is, taking a snack of something in order to still the pangs, as they say, and drinking one small glass of vodka, Mr. Golyadkin established himself in an armchair and, modestly looking about him, peacefully settled down to an emaciated nationalist paper. After reading a couple of lines he stood up and looked in the looking-glass, set himself to rights and smoothed himself down; then he went to the window and looked to see whether his carriage was there . . . then he sat down again in his place and took up the paper. It was noticeable that our hero was in great excitement. Glancing at his watch and seeing that it was only a quarter past three and that he had consequently a good time to wait and, at the same time, opining that to sit like that was unsuitable, Mr. Golyadkin ordered chocolate, though he felt no particular inclination for it at the moment. Drinking the chocolate and noticing that the time had moved on a little, he went up to pay his bill.

He turned round and saw facing him two of his colleagues, the same two he had met that morning in Liteyny Street, — young men, very much his juniors both in age and rank. Our hero's relations with them were neither one thing nor the other, neither particularly friendly nor openly hostile. Good manners were, of course, observed on both sides: there was no closer intimacy, nor could there be. The meeting at this moment was extremely distasteful to Mr. Golyadkin. He frowned a little, and was disconcerted for an instant.

"Yakov Petrovitch, Yakov Petrovitch!" chirped the two register clerks; "you here? what brings you? . . ."

"Ah, it is you, gentlemen," Mr. Golyadkin interrupted hurriedly, somewhat embarrassed and scandalized by the amazement of the clerks and by the abruptness of their address, but feeling obliged, however, to appear jaunty and free and easy. "You've deserted gentlemen, he-he-he . . ." Then, to keep up his dignity and to condescend to the juveniles, with whom he never overstepped certain limits, he attempted to slap one of the youths on the shoulder; but this effort at good fellowship did not succeed and, instead of being a well-bred little jest, produced quite a different effect.

"Well, and our bear, is he still at the office?"

"Who's that, Yakov Petrovitch?"

"Why, the bear. Do you mean to say you don't know whose name that is? . . ." Mr. Golyadkin laughed and turned to the cashier to take his change.

"I mean Andrey Filippovitch, gentlemen," he went on, finishing with the cashier, and turning to the clerks this time with a very serious face. The two register clerks winked at one another.

"He's still at the office and asking for you, Yakov Petrovitch," answered one of them.

"At the office, eh! In that case, let him stay, gentlemen. And asking for me, eh?"

"He was asking for you, Yakov Petrovitch; but what's up with you, scented, pomaded, and such a swell? . . ."

"Nothing, gentlemen, nothing! that's enough," answered Mr. Golyadkin, looking away with a constrained smile. Seeing that Mr. Golyadkin was smiling, the clerks laughed aloud. Mr. Golyadkin was a little offended.

"I'll tell you as friends, gentlemen," our hero said, after a brief silence, as though making up his mind (which, indeed, was the case) to reveal something to them. "You all know me, gentlemen, but hitherto you've known me only on one side. no one is to blame for that and I'm conscious that the fault has been partly my own."

Mr. Golyadkin pursed his lips and looked significantly at the clerks. The clerks winked at one another again.

"Hitherto, gentlemen, you have not known me. To explain myself here and now would not be appropriate. I will only touch on it lightly in passing. There are people, gentlemen, who dislike roundabout ways and only mask themselves at masquerades. There are people who do not see man's highest avocation in polishing the floor with their boots. There are people, gentlemen, who refuse to say that they are happy and enjoying a full life when, for instance, their trousers set properly. There are people, finally, who dislike dashing and whirling about for no object, fawning, and licking the dust, and above all, gentlemen, poking their noses where they are not wanted . . . I've told you almost everything, gentlemen; now allow me to withdraw. . ."

Mr. Golyadkin paused. As the register clerks had not got all that they wanted, both of them with great incivility burst into shouts of laughter. Mr. Golyadkin flared up.

"Laugh away, gentlemen, laugh away for the time being! If you live long enough you will see," he said, with a feeling of offended dignity, taking his hat and retreating to the door.

"But I will say more, gentlemen," he added, turning for the last time to the register clerks, "I will say more — you are both here with me face to face. This, gentlemen, is my rule: if I fail I don't lose heart, if I succeed I persevere, and in any case I am never underhand. I'm not one to intrigue — and I'm proud of it. I've never prided myself on diplomacy. They say, too, gentlemen, that the bird flies itself to the hunter. It's true and I'm ready to admit it; but who's the hunter, and who's the bird in this case? That is still the question, gentlemen!"

Mr. Golyadkin subsided into eloquent silence, and, with a most significant air, that is, pursing up his lips and raising his eyebrows as high as possible, he bowed to the clerks and walked out, leaving them in the utmost amazement.

"What are your orders now?" Petrushka asked, rather gruffly; he was probably weary of hanging about in the cold. "What are your orders?" he asked Mr. Golyadkin, meeting the terrible, withering glance with which our hero had protected himself twice already that morning, and to which he had recourse now for the third time as he came down the steps.

"To Ismailovsky Bridge."

"To Ismailovsky Bridge! Off!"

"Their dinner will not begin till after four, or perhaps five o'clock," thought Mr. Golyadkin; "isn't it early now? However, I can go a little early; besides, it's only a family dinner. And so I can go sans facons, as they say among well-bred people. Why shouldn't I go sans facons? The bear told us, too, that it would all be sans facons, and so I will be the same . . ." Such were Mr. Golyadkin's reflections and meanwhile his excitement grew more and more acute. It could be seen that he was preparing himself for some great enterprise, to say nothing more; he muttered to himself, gesticulated with his right hand, continually looked out of his carriage window, so that, looking at Mr. Golyadkin, no one would have said that he was on his way to a good dinner, and only a simple dinner in his family circle — sans facons, as they say among well-bred people. Finally, just at Ismailovsky Bridge, Mr. Golyadkin pointed out a house; and the carriage rolled up noisily and stopped at the first entrance on the right. Noticing a feminine figure at the second storey window, Mr. Golyadkin kissed his hand to her. He had, however, not the slightest idea what he was doing, for he felt more dead than alive at the moment. He got out of the carriage pale, distracted; he mounted the steps, took off his hat, mechanically straightened himself, and though he felt a slight trembling in his knees, he went upstairs.

"Olsufy Ivanovitch?" he inquired of the man who opened the door.

"At home, sir; at least he's not at home, his honour's not at home."

"What? What do you mean, my good man? I-I've come to dinner, brother. Why, you know me?"

"To be sure I know you! I've orders not to admit you."

"You . . . you, brother . . . you must be making a mistake. It's I, my boy, I'm invited; I've come to dinner," Mr. Golyadkin announced, taking off his coat and displaying unmistakable intentions of going into the room.

"Allow me, sir, you can't, sir. I've orders not to admit you. I've orders to refuse you. That's how it is."

Mr. Golyadkin turned pale. At that very moment the door of the inner room opened and Gerasimitch, Olsufy Ivanovitch's old butler, came out.

"You see the gentlemen wants to go in, Emelyan Gerasimitch, and I . . ."

"And you're a fool, Alexeitch. Go inside and send the rascal Semyonovitch here. It's impossible," he said politely but firmly, addressing Mr. Golyadkin. "It's quite impossible. His honour begs you to excuse him; he can't see you."

"He said he couldn't see me?" Mr. Golyadkin asked uncertainly. "Excuse me, Gerasimitch, why is it impossible?"

"It's quite impossible. I've informed your honour; they said 'Ask him to excuse us.' They can't see you."

"Why not? How's that? Why."

"Allow me, allow me! . . ."

"How is it though? It's out of the question! Announce me . . . How is it? I've come to dinner. . ."

"Excuse me, excuse me . . ."

"Ah, well, that's a different matter, they asked to be excused: but, allow me, Gerasimitch; how is it, Gerasimitch?"

"Excuse me, excuse me! replied Gerasimitch, very firmly putting away Mr. Golyadkin's hand and making way for two gentlemen who walked into the entry that very instant. The gentlemen in question were Andrey Filippovitch and his nephew Vladimir Semyonovitch. Both of the looked with amazement at Mr. Golyadkin. Andrey Filippovitch seemed about to say something, but Mr. Golyadkin had by now made up his mind: he was by now walking out of Olsufy Ivanovitch's entry, blushing and smiling, with eyes cast down and a countenance of helpless bewilderment. "I will come afterwards, Gerasimitch; I will explain myself: I hope that all this will without delay be explained in due season . . ."

"Yakov Petrovitch, Yakov Petrovitch . . ." He heard the voice of Andrey Filippovitch following him.

Mr. Golyadkin was by that time on the first landing. He turned quickly to Andrey Filippovitch.

"What do you desire, Andrey Filippovitch?" he said in a rather resolute voice.

"What's wrong with you, Yakov Petrovitch? In what way?"

"No matter, Andrey Filippovitch. I'm on my own account here. This is my private life, Andrey Filippovitch."

"What's that?"

"I say, Andrey Filippovitch, that this is my private life, and as for my being here, as far as I can see, there's nothing reprehensible to be found in it as regards my official relations."

"What! As regards your official . . . What's the matter with you, my good sir?"



"Nothing, Andrey Filippovitch, absolutely nothing; an impudent slut of a girl, and nothing more . . ."

"What! What?" Andrey Filippovitch was stupefied with amazement. Mr. Golyadkin, who had up till then looked as though he would fly into Andrey Filippovitch's face, seeing that the head of his office was laughing a little, almost unconsciously took a step forward. Andrey Filippovitch jumped back. Mr. Golyadkin went up one step and then another. Andrey Filippovitch looked about him uneasily. Mr. Golyadkin mounted the stairs rapidly. Still more rapidly Andrey Filippovitch darted into the flat and slammed the door after him. Mr. Golyadkin was left alone. Everything grew dark before his eyes. He was utterly nonplussed, and stood now in a sort of senseless hesitation, as though recalling something extremely senseless, too, that had happened quite recently. "Ech, ech!" he muttered, smiling with constraint. Meanwhile, there came the sounds of steps and voices on the stairs, probably of other guests invited by Olsufy Ivanovitch. Mr. Golyadkin recovered himself to some extent; put up his racoon collar, concealing himself behind it as far as possible, and began going downstairs with rapid little steps, tripping and stumbling in his haste. He felt overcome by a sort of weakness and numbness. His confusion was such that, when he came out on the steps, he did not even wait for his carriage but walked across the muddy court to it. When he reached his carriage and was about to get into it, Mr. Golyadkin inwardly uttered a desire to sink into the earth, or to hide in a mouse hole together with his carriage. It seemed to him that everything in Olsufy Ivanovitch's house was looking at him now out of every window. He knew that he would certainly die on the spot if he were to go back.

"What are you laughing at, blockhead?" he said in a rapid mutter to Petrushka, who was preparing to help him into the carriage.

"What should I laugh at? I'm not doing anything; where are we to drive to now?"

"Go home, drive on . . ."

"Home, off!" shouted Petrushka, climbing on to the footboard.

"What a crow's croak!" thought Mr. Golyadkin. Meanwhile, the carriage had driven a good distance from Ismailovsky Bridge. Suddenly our hero pulled the cord with all his might and shouted to the driver to turn back at once. The coachman turned his horses and within two minutes was driving into Olsufy Ivanovitch's yard again.

"Don't, don't, you fool, back!" shouted Mr. Golyadkin — and, as though he were expecting this order, the driver made no reply but, without stopping at the entrance, drove all round the courtyard and out into the street again.

Mr. Golyadkin did not drive home, but, after passing the Semyonovsky Bridge, told the driver to return to a side street and stop near a restaurant of rather modest appearance. Getting out of the carriage, our hero settled up with the driver and so got rid of his equipage at last. He told Petrushka to go home and await his return, while he went into the restaurant, took a private room and ordered dinner. He felt very ill and his brain was in the utmost confusion and chaos. For a long time he walked up and down the room in agitation; at last he sat down in a chair, propped his brow in his hands and began doing his very utmost to consider and settle something relating to his present position.

#### Chapter 4

That day the birthday of Klara Olsufyevna, the only daughter of the civil councillor, Berendyev, at one time Mr. Golyadkin's benefactor and patron, was being celebrated by a brilliant and sumptuous dinner-

party, such as had not been seen for many a long day within the walls of the flats in the neighbourhood of Ismailovsky Bridge — a dinner more like some Balthazar's feast, with a suggestion of something Babylonian in its brilliant luxury and style, with Veuve-Clicquot champagne, with oysters and fruit from Eliseyev's and Milyutin's, with all sorts of fatted calves, and all grades of the government service. This festive day was to conclude with a brilliant ball, a small birthday ball, but yet brilliant in its taste, its distinction and its style. Of course, I am willing to admit that similar balls do happen sometimes, though rarely. Such balls, more like family rejoicings than balls, can only be given in such houses as that of the civil councillor, Berendyev. I will say more: I even doubt if such balls could be given in the houses of all civil councillors. Oh, if I were a poet! such as Homer or Pushkin, I mean, of course; with any lesser talent one would not venture — I should certainly have painted all that glorious day for you, oh, my readers, with a free brush and brilliant colours! Yes, I should begin my poem with my dinner, I should lay special stress on that striking and solemn moment when the first goblet was raised to the honour of the queen of the fete. I should describe to you the guests plunged in a reverent silence and expectation, as eloquent as the rhetoric of Demosthenes; I should describe for you, then, how Andrey Filippovitch, having as the eldest of the guests some right to take precedence, adorned with his grey hairs and the orders that well befit grey hairs, got up from his seat and raised above his head the congratulatory glass of sparkling wine — brought from a distant kingdom to celebrate such occasions and more like heavenly nectar than plain wine. I would portray for you the guests and the happy parents raising their glasses, too, after Andrey Filippovitch, and fastening upon him eyes full of expectation. I would describe for you how the same Andrey Filippovitch, so often mentioned, after dropping a tear in his glass, delivered his congratulations and good wishes, proposed the toast and drank the health . . . but I confess, I freely confess, that I could not do justice to the solemn moment when the queen of the fete, Klara Olsufyevna, blushing like a rose in spring, with the glow of bliss and of modesty, was so overcome by her feelings that she sank into the arms of her tender mamma; how that tender mamma shed tears, and how the father, Olsufy Ivanovitch, a hale old man and a privy councillor, who had lost the use of his legs in his long years of service and been rewarded by destiny for his devotion with investments, a house, some small estates, and a beautiful daughter, sobbed like a little child and announced through his tears that his Excellency was a benevolent man. I could not, I positively could not, describe the enthusiasm that followed that moment in every heart, an enthusiasm clearly evinced in the conduct of a youthful register clerk (though at that moment he was more like a civil councillor than a register clerk), who was moved to tears, too, as he listened to Andrey Filippovitch. In his turn, too, Andrey Filippovitch was in that solemn moment quite unlike a collegiate councillor and the head of an office in the department — yes, he was something else . . . what, exactly, I do not know, but not a collegiate councillor. He was more exalted! Finally . . . Oh, why do I not possess the secret of lofty, powerful language, of the sublime style, to describe these grand and edifying moments of human life, which seem created expressly to prove that virtue sometimes triumphs over ingratitude, free-thinking, vice and envy! I will say nothing, but in silence — which will be better than any eloquence — I will point to that fortunate youth, just entering on his twenty-sixth spring — to Vladimir Semyonovitch, Andrey Filippovitch's nephew, who in his turn now rose from his seat, who in his turn proposed a toast, and upon whom were fastened the tearful eyes of the parents, the proud eyes of Andrey Filippovitch, the modest eyes of the queen of the fete, the solemn eyes of the guests and even the decorously envious eyes of some of the young man's youthful colleagues. I will say nothing of that, though I cannot refrain from observing that everything in that young man — who was, indeed, speaking in a complimentary sense, more like an elderly than a young man — everything, from his blooming cheeks to his assessorial rank seemed almost to proclaim aloud the lofty pinnacle a man can attain through morality and good principles! I will not describe how Anton Antonovitch Syetotochkin, a little old man as grey as a badger, the head clerk of a department, who was a colleague of Andrey Filippovitch's and had once been also of Olsufy Ivanovitch's, and was an old friend of the family and Klara Olsufyevna's godfather, in his turn proposed a toast, crowed like a cock, and cracked many little jokes; how by this extremely proper breach of propriety, if one may use such an expression, he made the whole company laugh till they cried, and how Klara Olsufyevna, at her parents' bidding, rewarded him for his jocularly and politeness with a

kiss. I will only say that the guests, who must have felt like kinsfolk and brothers after such a dinner, at last rose from the table, and the elderly and more solid guests, after a brief interval spent in friendly conversation, interspersed with some candid, though, of course, very polite and proper observations, went decorously into the next room and, without losing valuable time, promptly divided themselves up into parties and, full of the sense of their own dignity, installed themselves at tables covered with green baize. Meanwhile, the ladies established in the drawing-room suddenly became very affable and began talking about dress-materials. And the venerable host, who had lost the use of his legs in the service of loyalty and religion, and had been rewarded with all the blessings we have enumerated above, began walking about on crutches among his guests, supported by Vladimir Semyonovitch and Klara Olsufyevna, and he, too, suddenly becoming extremely affable, decided to improvise a modest little dance, regardless of expense; to that end a nimble youth (the one who was more like a civil councillor than a youth) was despatched to fetch musicians, and musicians to the number of eleven arrived, and exactly at half-past eight struck up the inviting strains of a French quadrille, followed by various other dances. . . . It is needless to say that my pen is too weak, dull, and spiritless to describe the dance that owed its inspiration to the genial hospitality of the grey-headed host. And how, I ask, can the modest chronicler of Mr. Golyadkin's adventures, extremely interesting as they are in their own way, how can I depict the choice and rare mingling of beauty, brilliance, style, gaiety, polite solidity and solid politeness, sportiveness, joy, all the mirth and playfulness of these wives and daughters of petty officials, more like fairies than ladies — in a complimentary sense — with their lily shoulders and their rosy faces, their ethereal figures, their playfully agile homeopathic — to use the exalted language appropriate — little feet? How can I describe to you, finally, the gallant officials, their partners — gay and solid youths, steady, gleeful, decorously vague, smoking a pipe in the intervals between the dancing in a little green room apart, or not smoking a pipe in the intervals between the dances, every one of them with a highly respectable surname and rank in the service — all steeped in a sense of the elegant and a sense of their own dignity; almost all speaking French to their partners, or if Russian, using only the most well-bred expressions, compliments and profound observations, and only in the smoking — room permitting themselves some genial lapses from this high tone, some phrases of cordial and friendly brevity, such, for instance, as: "Pon my soul, Petka, you rake, you did kick me off that polka in style," or, "I say, Vasya, you dog, you did give your partner a time of it." For all this, as I've already had the honour of explaining, oh, my readers! my pen fails me, and therefore I am dumb. Let us rather return to Mr. Golyadkin, the true and only hero of my very truthful tale.

The fact is that he found himself now in a very strange position, to the least of it. He was here also, gentlemen — that is, not at the dance, but almost at the dance; he was "all right, though; he could take care of himself," yet at that moment he was a little astray; he was standing at that moment, strange to say — on the landing of the back stairs to Olsufy Ivanovitch's flat. But it was "all right" his standing there; he was "quite well." He was standing in a corner, huddled in a place which was not very warm, though it was dark, partly hidden by a huge cupboard and an old screen, in the midst of rubbish, litter, and odds and ends of all sorts, concealing himself for the time being and watching the course of proceedings as a disinterested spectator. He was only looking on now, gentlemen; he, too, gentlemen, might go in, of course . . . why should he not go in? He had only to take one step and he would go in, and would go in very adroitly. Just now, though he had been standing nearly three hours between the cupboard and the screen in the midst of the rubbish, litter and odds and ends of all sorts, he was only quoting, in his own justification, a memorable phrase of the French minister, Villesle: "All things come in time to him who has the strength to wait." Mr. Golyadkin had read this sentence in some book on quite a different subject, but now very aptly recalled it. The phrase, to begin with, was exceedingly appropriate to his present position, and, indeed, why should it not occur to the mind of a man who had been waiting for almost three hours in the cold and the dark in expectation of a happy ending to his adventures. After quoting very appropriately the phrase of the French minister, Villesle, Mr. Golyadkin immediately thought of the Turkish Vizier, Martsimiris, as well as of the beautiful Mergravine Luise, whose story he had read also in some book. Then it occurred to his mind that the Jesuits made it their

rule that any means were justified if only the end were attained. Fortifying himself somewhat with this historical fact, Mr. Golyadkin said to himself, What were the Jesuits? The Jesuits were every one of them very great fools; that he was better than any of them; that if only the refreshment-room would be empty for one minute (the door of the refreshment-room opened straight into the passage to the back stairs, where Mr. Golyadkin was in hiding now), he would, in spite of all the Jesuits in the world, go straight in, first from the refreshment-room into the tea-room, then into the room where they were now playing cards, and then straight into the hall where they were now dancing the polka, and he would go in — he would slip through — and that would be all, no one would notice him; and once there he would know what to do.

Well, so this is the position in which we find the hero of our perfectly true story, though, indeed, it is difficult to explain what was passing in him at that moment. The fact is that he had made his way to the back of the stairs and to the passage, on the ground that, as he said, "why shouldn't he? and everyone did go that way?"; but he had not ventured to penetrate further, evidently he did not dare to do so . . . "not because there was anything he did not dare, but just because he did not care to, because he preferred to be in hiding"; so here he was, waiting now for a chance to slip in, and he had been waiting for it two hours and a half. "Why not wait? Villesle himself had waited. But what had Villesle to do with it?" thought Mr. Golyadkin: "How does Villesle come in? But how am I to . . . to go and walk in? . . . Ech, you dummy!" said Mr. Golyadkin, pinching his benumbed cheek with his benumbed fingers; "you silly fool, you silly old Golyadkin — silly fool of a surname!" . . .

But these compliments paid to himself were only by the way and without any apparent aim. Now he was on the point of pushing forward and slipping in; the refreshment-room was empty and no one was in sight. Mr. Golyadkin saw all this through the little window; in two steps he was at the door and had already opened it. "Should he go in or not? Come, should he or not? I'll go in . . . why not? to the bold all ways lie open!" Reassuring himself in this way, our hero suddenly and quite unexpectedly retreated behind the screen. "No," he thought. "Ah, now, somebody's coming in? Yes, they've come in; why did I dawdle when there were no people about? Even so, shall I go and slip in? . . . No, how slip in when a man has such a temperament! Fie, what a low tendency! I'm as scared as a hen! Being scared is our special line, that's the fact of the matter! To be abject on every occasion is our line: no need to ask us about that. Just stand here like a post and that's all! At home I should be having a cup of tea now . . . It would be pleasant, too, to have a cup of tea. If I come in later Petrushka 'll grumble, maybe. Shall I go home? Damnation take all this! I'll go and that'll be the end of it!" Reflecting on his position in this way, Mr. Golyadkin dashed forward as though some one had touched a spring in him; in two steps he found himself in the refreshment-room, flung off his overcoat, took off his hat, hurriedly thrust these things into a corner, straightened himself and smoothed himself down; then . . . then he moved on to the tea-room, and from the tea-room darted into the next room, slipped almost unnoticed between the card-players, who were at the tip-top of excitement, then . . . Mr. Golyadkin forgot everything that was going on about him, and went straight as an arrow into the drawing room.

As luck would have it they were not dancing. The ladies were promenading up and down the room in picturesque groups. The gentlemen were standing about in twos and threes or flitting about the room engaging partners. Mr. Golyadkin noticed nothing of this. He saw only Klara Olsufyevna, near her Andrey Filippovitch, then Vladimir Semyonovitch, two or three officers, and, finally, two or three other young men who were also very interesting and, as any one could see at once, were either very promising or had actually done something. . . . He saw some one else too. Or, rather, he saw nobody and looked at nobody . . . but, moved by the same spring which had sent him dashing into the midst of a ball to which he had not been invited, he moved forward, and then forwarder and forwarder. On the way he jostled against a councillor and trod on his foot, and incidentally stepped on a very venerable old lady's dress and tore it a little, pushed against a servant with a tray and then ran against somebody else, and, not noticing all this, passing further and further forward, he suddenly found himself facing Klara

Olsufyevna. There is no doubt whatever that he would, with the utmost delight, without winking an eyelid, have sunk through the earth at that moment; but what has once been done cannot be recalled . . . can never be recalled. What was he to do? "If I fail I don't lose heart, if I succeed I persevere." Mr. Golyadkin was, of course, not "one to intrigue," and "not accomplished in the art of polishing the floor with his boots." . . . And so, indeed, it proved. Besides, the Jesuits had some hand in it too . . . though Mr. Golyadkin had no thoughts to spare for them now! All the moving, noisy, laughing groups were suddenly hushed as though at a signal and, little by little, crowded round Mr. Golyadkin. He, however, seemed to hear nothing, to see nothing, he could not look . . . he could not possibly look at anything; he kept his eyes on the floor and so stood, giving himself his word of honour, in passing, to shoot himself one way or another that night. Making this vow, Mr. Golyadkin inwardly said to himself, "Here goes!" and to his own great astonishment began unexpectedly to speak.

He began with congratulations and polite wishes. The congratulations went off well, but over the good wishes our hero stammered. He felt that if he stammered all would be lost at once. And so it turned out — he stammered and floundered . . . floundering, he blushed crimson; blushing, he was overcome with confusion. In his confusion he raised his eyes; raising his eyes he looked about him; looking about him — he almost swooned . . . Every one stood still, every one was silent, a little nearer there was laughter. Mr. Golyadkin fastened a humble, imploring look on Andrey Filippovitch. Andrey Filippovitch. Andrey Filippovitch responded with such a look that if our hero had not been utterly crushed already he certainly would have been crushed a second time — that is, if that were possible. The silence lasted long.

"This is rather concerned with my domestic circumstances and my private life, Andrey Filippovitch," our hero, half-dead, articulated in a scarcely audible voice; "it is not an official incident, Andrey Filippovitch . . ."

"For shame, sir, for shame!" Andrey Filippovitch pronounced in a half whisper, with an indescribable air of indignation; he pronounced these words and, giving Klara Olsufyevna his arm, he turned away from Mr. Golyadkin.

"I've nothing to be ashamed of, Andrey Filippovitch," answered Mr. Golyadkin, also in a whisper, turning his miserable eyes about him, trying helplessly to discover in the amazed crowd something on which he could gain a footing and retrieve his social position.

"Why, it's all right, it's nothing, gentlemen! Why, what's the matter? Why, it might happen to any one," whispered Mr. Golyadkin, moving a little away and trying to escape from the crowd surrounding him.

They made way for him. Our hero passed through two rows of inquisitive and wondering spectators. Fate drew him on. He felt himself, that fate was leading him on. He would have given a great deal, of course, for a chance to be back in the passage by the back stairs, without having committed a breach of propriety; but as that was utterly impossible he began trying to creep away into a corner and to stand there — modestly, decorously, apart, without interfering with any one, without attracting especial attention, but at the same time to win the favourable notice of his host and the company. At the same time Mr. Golyadkin felt as though the ground were giving way under him, as though he were staggering, falling. At last he made his way to a corner and stood in it, like an unconcerned, rather indifferent spectator, leaning his arms on the backs of two chairs, taking complete possession of them in that way, and trying, as far as he could, to glance confidently at Olsufy Ivanovitch's guests, grouped about him. Standing nearest him was an officer, a tall and handsome fellow, beside whom Golyadkin felt himself an insect.

"These two chairs, lieutenant, are intended, one for Klara Olsufyevna, and the other for Princess Tchevtchehanov; I'm taking care of them for them," said Mr. Golyadkin breathlessly, turning his imploring eyes on the officer. The lieutenant said nothing, but turned away with a murderous smile. Checked in this direction, our hero was about to try his luck in another quarter, and directly addressed an important councillor with a cross of great distinction on his breast. But the councillor looked him up and down with such a frigid stare that Mr. Golyadkin felt distinctly as though a whole bucketful of cold water had been thrown over him. He subsided into silence. He made up his mind that it was better to keep quiet, not to open his lips, and to show that he was "all right," that he was "like every one else," and that his position, as far as he could see, was quite a proper one. With this object he rivetted his gaze on the lining of his coat, then raised his eyes and fixed them upon a very respectable-looking gentleman. "That gentleman has a wig on," thought Mr. Golyadkin; "and if he takes off that wig he will be bald, his head will be as bare as the palm of my hand." Having made this important discovery, Mr. Golyadkin thought of the Arab Emirs, whose heads are left bare and shaven if they take off the green turbans they wear as a sign of their descent from the prophet Mahomet. Then, probably from some special connection of ideas with the Turks, he thought of Turkish slippers and at once, apropos of that, recalled the fact that Andrey Filippovitch was wearing boots, and that his boots were more like slippers than boots. It was evident that Mr. Golyadkin had become to some extent reconciled to his position. "What if that chandelier," flashed through Mr. Golyadkin's mind, "were to come down from the ceiling and fall upon the company. I should rush at once to save Klara Olsufyevna. 'Save her!' I should cry. 'Don't be alarmed, madam, it's of no consequence, I will rescue you, I.' Then . . ." At that moment Mr. Golyadkin looked about in search of Klara Olsufyevna, and saw Gerasimitch, Olsufy Ivanovitch's old butler. Gerasimitch, with a most anxious and solemnly official air, was making straight for him. Mr. Golyadkin started and frowned from an unaccountable but most disagreeable sensation; he looked about him mechanically; it occurred to his mind that if only he could somehow creep off somewhere, unobserved, on the sly — simply disappear, that it, behave as though he had done nothing at all, as though the matter did not concern him in the least! . . . But before our hero could make up his mind to do anything, Gerasimitch was standing before him.

"Do you see, Gerasimitch," said our hero, with a little smile, addressing Gerasimitch; "you go and tell them — do you see the candle there in the chandelier, Gerasimitch — it will be falling down directly: so, you know, you must tell them to see to it; it really will fall down, Gerasimitch . . ."

"The candle? No, the candle's standing straight; but somebody is asking for you, sir."

"Who is asking for me, Gerasimitch?"

"I really can't say, sir, who it is. A man with a message. 'Is Yakov Petrovitch Golyadkin here?' says he. 'Then call him out,' says he, 'on very urgent and important business . . .' you see."

"No, Gerasimitch, you are making a mistake; in that you are making a mistake, Gerasimitch."

"I doubt it, sir."

"No, Gerasimitch, it isn't doubtful; there's nothing doubtful about it, Gerasimitch. Nobody's asking for me, but I'm quite at home here — that is, in my right place, Gerasimitch."

Mr. Golyadkin took breath and looked about him. Yes! every one in the room, all had their eyes fixed upon him, and were listening in a sort of solemn expectation. The men had crowded a little nearer and were all attention. A little further away the ladies were whispering together. The master of the house made his appearance at no great distance from Mr. Golyadkin, and though it was impossible to detect

from his expression that he, too, was taking a close and direct interest in Mr. Golyadkin's position, for everything was being done with delicacy, yet, nevertheless, it all made our hero feel that the decisive moment had come for him. Mr. Golyadkin saw clearly that the time had come for a old stroke, the chance of putting his enemies to shame. Mr. Golyadkin was in great agitation. He was aware of a sort of inspiration and, in a quivering and impressive voice, he began again, addressing the waiting butler —

"No, my dear fellow, no one's calling for me. You are mistaken. I will say more: you were mistaken this morning too, when you assured me. . . . dared to assure me, I say (he raised his voice), "that Olsufy Ivanovitch, who has been my benefactor for as long as I can remember and has, in a sense, been a father to me, was shutting his door upon me at the moment of solemn family rejoicing for his paternal heart." (Mr. Golyadkin looked about him complacently, but with deep feeling. A tear glittered on his eyelash.) "I repeat, my friend," our hero concluded, "you were mistaken, you were cruelly and unpardonably mistaken . . . ."

The moment was a solemn one. Mr. Golyadkin felt that the effect was quite certain. He stood with modestly downcast eyes, expecting Olsufy Ivanovitch to embrace him. Excitement and perplexity were apparent in the guests, even the inflexible and terrible Gerasimitch faltered over the words "I doubt it . . ." when suddenly the ruthless orchestra, apropos of nothing, struck up a polka. All was lost, all was scattered to the winds. Mr. Golyadkin started; Gerasimitch stepped back; everything in the room began undulating like the sea; and Vladimir Semyonovitch led the dance with Klara Olsufyevna, while the handsome lieutenant followed with Princess Tchevtchehanov. Onlookers, curious and delighted, squeezed in to watch them dancing the polka — an interesting, fashionable new dance which every one was crazy over. Mr. Golyadkin was, for the time, forgotten. But suddenly all were thrown into excitement, confusion and bustle; the music ceased . . . a strange incident had occurred. Tired out with the dance, and almost breathless with fatigue, Klara Olsufyevna, with glowing cheeks and heaving bosom, sank into an armchair, completely exhausted . . . All hearts turned to the fascinating creature, all vied with one another in complimenting her and thanking her for the pleasure conferred on them, — all at once there stood before her Mr. Golyadkin. He was pale, extremely perturbed; he, too, seemed completely exhausted, he could scarcely move. He was smiling for some reason, he stretched out his hand imploringly. Klara Olsufyevna was so taken aback that she had not time to withdraw hers and mechanically got up at his invitation. Mr. Golyadkin lurched forward, first once, then a second time, then lifted his leg, then made a scrape, then gave a sort of stamp, then stumbled . . . he, too, wanted to dance with Klara Olsufyevna. Klara Olsufyevna uttered a shriek; every one rushed to release her hand from Mr. Golyadkin's, and in a moment our hero was carried almost ten paces away by the rush of the crowd. A circle formed round him too. Two old ladies, whom he had almost knocked down in his retreat raised a great shrieking and outcry. The confusion was awful; all were asking questions, every one was shouting, every one was finding fault. The orchestra was silent. Our hero whirled round in his circle and mechanically, with a semblance of a smile, muttered something to himself, such as, "Why not?" and "that the polka, so far, at least, as he could see, was a new and very interesting dance, invented for the diversion of the ladies . . . but that since things had taken this turn, he was ready to consent." But Mr. Golyadkin's consent no one apparently thought of asking. Our hero was suddenly aware that some one's hand was laid on his arm, that another hand was pressed against his back, that he was with peculiar solicitude being guided in a certain direction. At last he noticed that he was going straight to the door. Mr. Golyadkin wanted to say something, to do something. . . . But no, he no longer wanted to do anything. He only mechanically kept laughing in answer. At last he was aware that they were putting on his greatcoat, that his hat was thrust over his eyes; finally he felt that he was in the entry on the stairs in the dark and cold. At last he stumbled, he felt that he was falling down a precipice; he tried to cry out — and suddenly he found himself in the courtyard. The air blew fresh on him, he stood still for a minute; at that very instant, the strains reached him of the orchestra striking up again. Mr. Golyadkin suddenly recalled it all; it seemed to him that all his flagging energies came back to him again. He had

been standing as though rivetted to the spot, but now he started off and rushed away headlong, anywhere, into the air, into freedom, wherever chance might take him.

## Chapter 5

It was striking midnight from all the clock towers in Petersburg when Mr. Golyadkin, beside himself, ran out on the Fontanka Quay, close to the Ismailovsky Bridge, fleeing from his foes, from persecution, from a hailstorm of nips and pinches aimed at him, from the shrieks of excited old ladies, from the Ohs and Ahs of women and from the murderous eyes of Andrey Filippovitch. Mr. Golyadkin was killed — killed entirely, in the full sense of the word, and if he still preserved the power of running, it was simply through some sort of miracle, a miracle in which at last he refused himself to believe. It was an awful November night — wet, foggy, rainy, snowy, teeming with colds in the head, fevers, swollen faces, quinsies, inflammations of all kinds and descriptions — teeming, in fact, with all the gifts of a Petersburg November. The wind howled in the deserted streets, lifting up the black water of the canal above the rings on the bank, and irritably brushing against the lean lamp-posts which chimed in with its howling in a thin, shrill creak, keeping up the endless squeaky, jangling concert with which every inhabitant of Petersburg is so familiar. Snow and rain were falling both at once. Lashed by the wind, the streams of rainwater spurted almost horizontally, as though from a fireman's hose, pricking and stinging the face of the luckless Mr. Golyadkin like a thousand pins and needles. In the stillness of the night, broken only by the distant rumbling of carriages, the howl of the wind and the creaking of the lamp-posts, there was the dismal sound of the splash and gurgle of water, rushing from every roof, every porch, every pipe and every cornice, on to the granite of the pavement. There was not a soul, near or far, and, indeed, it seemed there could not be at such an hour and in such weather. And so only Mr. Golyadkin, alone with his despair, was fleeing in terror along the pavement of Fontanka, with his usual rapid little step, in haste to get home as soon as possible to his flat on the fourth storey in Shestilavotchny Street.

Though the snow, the rain, and all the nameless horrors of a raging snowstorm and fog, under a Petersburg November sky, were attacking Mr. Golyadkin, already shattered by misfortunes, were showing him no mercy, giving him no rest, drenching him to the bone, glueing up his eyelids, blowing right through him from all sides, baffling and perplexing him — though conspiring and combining with all his enemies to make a grand day, evening, and night for him, in spite of all this Mr. Golyadkin was almost insensible to this final proof of the persecution of destiny: so violent had been the shock and the impression made upon him a few minutes before at the civil councillor Berendyev's! If any disinterested spectator could have glanced casually at Mr. Golyadkin's painful progress, he would certainly have said that Mr. Golyadkin looked as though he wanted to hide from himself, as though he were trying to run away from himself! Yes! It was really so. One may say more: Mr. Golyadkin did not want only to run away from himself, but to be obliterated, to cease to be, to return to dust. At the moment he took in nothing surrounding him, understood nothing of what was going on about him, and looked as though the miseries of the stormy night, of the long tramp, the rain, the snow, the wind, all the cruelty of the weather, did not exist for him. The golosh slipping off the boot on Mr. Golyadkin's right foot was left behind in the snow and slush on the pavement of Fontanka, and Mr. Golyadkin did not think of turning back to get it, did not, in fact, notice that he had lost it. He was so perplexed that, in spite of everything surrounding him, he stood several times stock still in the middle of the pavement, completely possessed by the thought of his recent horrible humiliation; at that instant he was dying, disappearing; then he suddenly set off again like mad and ran and ran without looking back, as though he were pursued, as though he were fleeing from some still more awful calamity. . . . The position was truly awful! . . . At last Mr. Golyadkin halted in exhaustion, leaned on the railing in the attitude of a man whose nose has suddenly begun to bleed, and began looking intently at the black and troubled waters of the canal. All that is known is that at that instant Mr. Golyadkin reached such a pitch of despair, was so harassed, so tortured, so exhausted, and so weakened in what feeble faculties were left him that he



forgot everything, forgot the Ismailovsky Bridge, forgot Shestilavotchny Street, forgot his present plight . . . After all, what did it matter to him? The thing was done. The decision was affirmed and ratified; what could he do? All at once . . . all at once he started and involuntarily skipped a couple of paces aside. With unaccountable uneasiness he began gazing about him; but no one was there, nothing special had happened, and yet . . . and yet he fancied that just now, that very minute, some one was standing near him, beside him, also leaning on the railing, and — marvellous to relate! — had even said something to him, said something quickly, abruptly, not quite intelligibly, but something quite private, something concerning himself.

"Why, was it my fancy?" said Mr. Golyadkin, looking round once more. "But where am I standing? . . . Ech, ech," he thought finally, shaking his head, though he began gazing with an uneasy, miserable feeling into the damp, murky distance, straining his sight and doing his utmost to pierce with his short-sighted eyes the wet darkness that stretched all round him. There was nothing new, however, nothing special caught the eye of Mr. Golyadkin. Everything seemed to be all right, as it should be, that is, the snow was falling more violently, more thickly and in larger flakes, nothing could be seen twenty paces away, the lamp-posts creaked more shrilly than ever and the wind seemed to intone its melancholy song even more tearfully, more piteously, like an importunate beggar whining for a copper to get a crust of bread. At the same time a new sensation took possession of Mr. Golyadkin's whole being: agony upon agony, terror upon terror . . . a feverish tremor ran through his veins. The moment was insufferably unpleasant! "Well, no matter; perhaps it's no matter at all, and there's no stain on any one's honour. Perhaps it's as it should be," he went on, without understanding what he was saying. "Perhaps it will all be for the best in the end, and there will be nothing to complain of, and every one will be justified."

Talking like this and comforting himself with words, Mr. Golyadkin shook himself a little, shook off the snow which had drifted in thick layers on his hat, his collar, his overcoat, his tie, his boots and everything — but his strange feeling, his strange obscure misery he could not get rid of, could not shake off. Somewhere in the distance there was the boom of a cannon shot. "Ach, what weather!" thought our hero. "Tchoo! isn't there going to be a flood? It seems as though the water has risen so violently."

Mr. Golyadkin had hardly said or thought this when he saw a person coming towards him, belated, no doubt, like him, through some accident. An unimportant, casual incident, one might suppose, but for some unknown reason Mr. Golyadkin was troubled, even scared, and rather flurried. It was not that he was exactly afraid of some ill-intentioned man, but just that "perhaps . . . after all, who knows, this belated individual," flashed through Mr. Golyadkin's mind, "maybe he's that very thing, maybe he's the very principal thing in it, and isn't here for nothing, but is here with an object, crossing my path and provoking me." Possibly, however, he did not think this precisely, but only had a passing feeling of something like it — and very unpleasant. There was no time, however, for thinking and feeling. The stranger was already within two paces. Mr. Golyadkin, as he invariably did, hastened to assume a quite peculiar air, an air that expressed clearly that he, Golyadkin, kept himself to himself, that he was "all right," that the road was wide enough for all, and that he, Golyadkin, was not interfering with any one. Suddenly he stopped short as though petrified, as though struck by lightning, and quickly turned round after the figure which had only just passed him — turned as though some one had given him a tug from behind, as though the wind had turned him like a weathercock. The passer-by vanished quickly in the snowstorm. He, too, walked quickly; he was dressed like Mr. Golyadkin and, like him, too, wrapped up from head to foot, and he, too, tripped and trotted along the pavement of Fontanka with rapid little steps that suggested that he was a little scared.

"What — what is it?" whispered Mr. Golyadkin, smiling mistrustfully, though he trembled all over. An icy shiver ran down his back. Meanwhile, the stranger had vanished completely; there was no sound of his step, while Mr. Golyadkin still stood and gazed after him. At last, however, he gradually came to himself.

"Why, what's the meaning of it?" he thought with vexation. "Why, have I really gone out of my mind, or what?" He turned and went on his way, making his footsteps more rapid and frequent, and doing his best not to think of anything at all. He even closed his eyes at last with the same object. Suddenly, through the howling of the wind and the uproar of the storm, the sound of steps very close at hand reached his ears again. He started and opened his eyes. Again a rapidly approaching figure stood out black before him, some twenty paces away. This little figure was hastening, tripping along, hurrying nervously; the distance between them grew rapidly less. Mr. Golyadkin could by now get a full view of the second belated companion. He looked full at him and cried out with amazement and horror; his legs gave way under him. It was the same individual who had passed him ten minutes before, and who now quite unexpectedly turned up facing him again. But this was not the only marvel that struck Mr. Golyadkin. He was so amazed that he stood still, cried out, tried to say something, and rushed to overtake the stranger, even shouted something to him, probably anxious to stop him as quickly as possible. The stranger did, in fact, stop ten paces from Mr. Golyadkin, so that the light from the lamp-post that stood near fell full upon his whole figure — stood still, turned to Mr. Golyadkin, and with impatient and anxious face waited to hear what he would say.

"Excuse me, possibly I'm mistaken," our hero brought out in a quavering voice.

The stranger in silence, and with an air of annoyance, turned and rapidly went on his way, as though in haste to make up for the two seconds he had wasted on Mr. Golyadkin. As for the latter, he was quivering in every nerve, his knees shook and gave way under him, and with a moan he squatted on a stone at the edge of the pavement. There really was reason, however, for his being so overwhelmed. The fact is that this stranger seemed to him somehow familiar. That would have been nothing, though. But he recognised, almost certainly recognised this man. He had often seen him, that man, had seen him some time, and very lately too; where could it have been? Surely not yesterday? But, again, that was not the chief thing that Mr. Golyadkin had often seen him before; there was hardly anything special about the man; the man at first sight would not have aroused any special attention. He was just a man like any one else, a gentleman like all other gentlemen, of course, and perhaps he had some good qualities and very valuable one too — in fact, he was a man who was quite himself. Mr. Golyadkin cherished no sort of hatred or enmity, not even the slightest hostility towards this man — quite the contrary, it would seem, indeed — and yet (and this was the real point) he would not for any treasure on earth have been willing to meet that man, and especially to meet him as he had done now, for instance. We may say more: Mr. Golyadkin knew that man perfectly well: he even knew what he was called, what his name was; and yet nothing would have induced him, and again, for no treasure on earth would he have consented to name him, to consent to acknowledge that he was called so-and-so, that his father's name was this and his surname was that. Whether Mr. Golyadkin's stupefaction lasted a short time or a long time, whether he was sitting for a long time on the stone of the pavement I cannot say; but, recovering himself a little at last, he suddenly fell to running, without looking round, as fast as his legs could carry him; his mind was preoccupied, twice he stumbled and almost fell — and through this circumstance his other boot was also bereaved of its golosh. At last Mr. Golyadkin slackened his pace a little to get breath, looked hurriedly round and saw that he had already, without being aware of it, run passed part of the Nevsky Prospect and was now standing at the turning into Liteyny Street. Mr. Golyadkin turned into Liteyny Street. His position at that instant was like that of a man standing at the edge of a fearful precipice, while the earth is bursting open under him, is already shaking, moving, rocking for the last time, falling, drawing him into the abyss, and yet, the luckless wretch has not the strength, nor the resolution, to leap back, to avert his eyes from the yawning gulf below; the abyss draws him and at last he leaps into it of himself, himself hastening the moment of destruction. Mr. Golyadkin knew, felt and was firmly convinced that some other evil would certainly befall him on the way, that some unpleasantness would overtake him, that he would, for instance, meet his stranger once more: but — strange to say, he positively desired this meeting, considered it inevitable, and all he asked was that it might all be quickly over, that he should be relieved from his position in one way or another, but as

soon as possible. And meanwhile he ran on and on, as though moved by some external force, for he felt a weakness and numbness in his whole being; he could not think of anything, though his thoughts caught at everything like brambles. A little lost dog, soaked and shivering, attached itself to Mr. Golyadkin, and ran beside him, scurrying along with tail and ears drooping, looking at him from time to time with timid comprehension. Some remote, long-forgotten idea — some memory of something that had happened long ago — came back into his mind now, kept knocking at his brain as with a hammer, vexing him and refusing to be shaken off.

"Ech, that horrid little cur!" whispered Mr. Golyadkin, not understanding himself.

At last he saw his stranger at the turning into Italyansky Street. But this time the stranger was not coming to meet him, but was running in the same direction as he was, and he, too, was running, a few steps in front. At last they turned into Shestilavotchny Street.

Mr. Golyadkin caught his breath. The stranger stopped exactly before the house in which Mr. Golyadkin lodged. He heard a ring at the bell and almost at the same time the grating of the iron bolt. The gate opened, the stranger stooped, darted in and disappeared. Almost at the same instant Mr. Golyadkin reached the spot and like an arrow flew in at the gate. Heedless of the grumbling porter, he ran, gasping for breath, into the yard, and immediately saw his interesting companion, whom he had lost sight of for a moment.

The stranger darted towards the staircase which led to Mr. Golyadkin's flat. Mr. Golyadkin rushed after him. The stairs were dark, damp and dirt. At every turning there were heaped-up masses of refuse from the flats, so that any unaccustomed stranger who found himself on the stairs in the dark was forced to travel to and fro for half an hour in danger of breaking his legs, cursing the stairs as well as the friends who lived in such an inconvenient place. But Mr. Golyadkin's companion seemed as though familiar with it, as though at home; he ran up lightly, without difficulty, showing a perfect knowledge of his surroundings. Mr. Golyadkin had almost caught him up; in fact, once or twice the stranger's coat flicked him on the nose. His heart stood still. The stranger stopped before the door of Mr. Golyadkin's flat, knocked on it, and (which would, however, have surprised Mr. Golyadkin at any other time) Petrushka, as though he had been sitting up in expectation, opened the door at once and, with a candle in his hand, followed the strange as the latter went in. The hero of our story dashed into his lodging beside himself; without taking off his hat or coat he crossed the little passage and stood still in the doorway of his room, as though thunderstruck. All his presentiments had come true. All that he had dreaded and surmised was coming to pass in reality. His breath failed him, his head was in a whirl. The stranger, also in his coat and hat, was sitting before him on his bed, and with a faint smile, screwing up his eyes, nodded to him in a friendly way. Mr. Golyadkin wanted to scream, but could not — to protest in some way, but his strength failed him. His hair stood on end, and he almost fell down with horror. And, indeed, there was good reason. He recognised his nocturnal visitor. The nocturnal visitor was no other than himself — Mr. Golyadkin himself, another Mr. Golyadkin, but absolutely the same as himself — in fact, what is called a double in every respect. . .

## Chapter 6

At eight o'clock next morning Mr. Golyadkin woke up in his bed. At once all the extraordinary incidents of the previous day and the wild, incredible night, with all its almost impossible adventures, presented themselves to his imagination and memory with terrifying vividness. Such intense, diabolical malice on the part of his enemies, and, above all, the final proof of that malice, froze Mr. Golyadkin's heart. But at the same time it was all so strange, incomprehensible, wild, it seemed so impossible, that it was really hard to credit the whole business; Mr. Golyadkin was, indeed, ready to admit himself that it

was all an incredible delusion, a passing aberration of the fancy, a darkening of the mind, if he had not fortunately known by bitter experience to what lengths spite will sometimes carry any one, what a pitch of ferocity an enemy may reach when he is bent on revenging his honour and prestige. Besides, Mr. Golyadkin's exhausted limbs, his heavy head, his aching back, and the malignant cold in his head bore vivid witness to the probability of his expedition of the previous night and upheld the reality of it, and to some extent of all that had happened during that expedition. And, indeed, Mr. Golyadkin had known long, long before that something was being got up among them, that there was some one else with them. But after all, thinking it over thoroughly, he made up his mind to keep quiet, to submit and not to protest for the time.

"They are simply plotting to frighten me, perhaps, and when they see that I don't mind, that I make no protest, but keep perfectly quiet and put up with it meekly, they'll give it up, they'll give it up of themselves, give it up of their own accord."

Such, then, were the thoughts in the mind of Mr. Golyadkin as, stretching in his bed, trying to rest his exhausted limbs, he waited for Petrushka to come into his room as usual . . . He waited for a full quarter of an hour. He heard the lazy scamp fiddling about with the samovar behind the screen, and yet he could not bring himself to call him. We may say more: Mr. Golyadkin was a little afraid of confronting Petrushka.

"Why, goodness knows," he thought, "goodness knows how that rascal looks at it all. He keeps on saying nothing, but he has his own ideas."

At last the door creaked and Petrushka came in with a tray in his hands. Mr. Golyadkin stole a timid glance at him, impatiently waiting to see what would happen, waiting to see whether he would not say something about a certain circumstance. But Petrushka said nothing; he was, on the contrary, more silent, more glum and ill-humoured than usual; he looked askance from under his brows at everything; altogether it was evident that he was very much put out about something; he did not even once glance at his master, which, by the way, rather piqued the latter. Setting all he had brought on the table, he turned and went out of the room without a word.

"He knows, he knows, he knows all about it, the scoundrel!" Mr. Golyadkin grumbled to himself as he took his tea. Yet out hero did not address a single question to his servant, though Petrushka came into his room several times afterwards on various errands. Mr. Golyadkin was in great trepidation of spirit. He dreaded going to the office. He had a strong presentiment that there he would find something that would not be "just so."

"You may be sure," he thought, "that as soon as you go you will light upon something! Isn't it better to endure in patience? Isn't it better to wait a bit now? Let them do what they like there; but I'd better stay here a bit today, recover my strength, get better, and think over the whole affair more thoroughly, then afterwards I could seize the right moment, fall upon them like snow from the sky, and get off scot free myself."

Reasoning like this, Mr. Golyadkin smoked pipe after pipe; time was flying. It was already nearly half-past nine.

"Why, it's half-past nine already," thought Mr. Golyadkin; "it's late for me to make my appearance. Besides, I'm ill, of course I'm ill, I'm certainly ill; who denies it? What's the matter with me? If they send to make inquiries, let the executive clerk come; and, indeed, what is the matter with me really? My back aches, I have a cough, and a cold in my head; and, in fact, it's out of the question for me to go out,

utterly out of the question in such weather. I might be taken ill and, very likely, die; nowadays especially the death-rate is so high . . ."

With such reasoning Mr. Golyadkin succeeded at last in setting his conscience at rest, and defended himself against the reprimands he expected from Andrey Filippovitch for neglect of his duty. As a rule in such cases our hero was particularly fond of justifying himself in his own eyes with all sorts of irrefutable arguments, and so completely setting his conscience at rest. And so now, having completely soothed his conscience, he took up his pipe, filled it, and had no sooner settled down comfortably to smoke, when he jumped up quickly from the sofa, flung away the pipe, briskly washed, shaved, and brushed his hair, got into his uniform and so on, snatched up some papers, and flew to the office.

Mr. Golyadkin went into his department timidly, in quivering expectation of something unpleasant — an expectation which was none the less disagreeable for being vague and unconscious; he sat timidly down in his invariable place next the head clerk, Anton Antonovitch Syetotchkin. Without looking at anything or allowing his attention to be distracted, he plunged into the contents of the papers that lay before him. He made up his mind and vowed to himself to avoid, as far as possible, anything provocative, anything that might compromise him, such as indiscreet questions, jests, or unseemly allusions to any incidents of the previous evening; he made up his mind also to abstain from the usual interchange of civilities with his colleagues, such as inquiries after health and such like. But evidently it was impossible, out of the question, to keep to this. Anxiety and uneasiness in regard to anything near him that was annoying always worried him far more than the annoyance itself. And that was why, in spite of his inward vows to refrain from entering into anything, whatever happened, and to keep aloof from everything, Mr. Golyadkin from time to time, on the sly, very, very quietly, raised his head and stealthily looked about him to right and to left, peeped at the countenances of his colleagues, and tried to gather whether there were not something new and particular in them referring to himself and with sinister motives concealed from him. He assumed that there must be a connection between all that had happened yesterday and all that surrounded him now. At last, in his misery, he began to long for something — goodness knows what — to happen to put an end to it — even some calamity — he did not care. At this point destiny caught Mr. Golyadkin: he had hardly felt this desire when his doubts were solved in the strange and most unexpected manner.

The door leading from the next room suddenly gave a soft and timid creak, as though to indicate that the person about to enter was a very unimportant one, and a figure, very familiar to Mr. Golyadkin, stood shyly before the very table at which our hero was seated. The latter did not raise his head — no, he only stole a glance at him, the tiniest glance; but he knew all, he understood all, to every detail. He grew hot with shame, and buried his devoted head in his papers with precisely the same object with which the ostrich, pursued by hunters, hides his head in the burning sand. The new arrival bowed to Andrey Filippovitch, and thereupon he heard a voice speaking in the regulation tone of condescending tone of politeness with which all persons in authority address their subordinates in public offices.

"Take a seat here." said Andrey Filippovitch, motioning the newcomer to Anton Antonovitch's table. "Here, opposite Mr. Golyadkin, and we'll soon give you something to do."

Andrey Filippovitch ended by making a rapid gesture that decorously admonished the newcomer of his duty, and then he immediately became engrossed in the study of the papers that lay in a heap before him.

Mr. Golyadkin lifted his eyes at last, and that he did not fall into a swoon was simply because he had foreseen it all from the first, that he had been forewarned from the first, guessing in his soul who the stranger was. Mr. Golyadkin's first movement was to look quickly about him, to see whether there were any whispering, any office joke being cracked on the subject, whether any one's face was agape with

wonder, whether, indeed, some one had not fallen under the table from terror. But to his intense astonishment there was no sign of anything of the sort. The behaviour of his colleagues and companions surprised him. It seemed contrary to the dictates of common sense. Mr. Golyadkin was positively scared at this extraordinary reticent. The fact spoke for itself; it was a strange, horrible, uncanny thing. It was enough to rouse any one. All this, of course, only passed rapidly through Mr. Golyadkin's mind. He felt as though he were burning in a slow fire. And, indeed, there was enough to make him. The figure that was sitting opposite Mr. Golyadkin now was his terror, was his shame, was his nightmare of the evening before; in short, was Mr. Golyadkin himself, not the Mr. Golyadkin who was sitting now in his chair with his mouth wide open and his pen petrified in his hand, not the one who acted as assistant to his chief, not the one who liked to efface himself and slink away in the crowd, not the one whose deportment plainly said, "Don't touch me and I won't touch you," or, "Don't interfere with me, you see I'm not touching you"; no, this was another Mr. Golyadkin, quite different, yet at the same time, exactly like the first — the same height, the same figure, the same clothes, the same baldness; in fact, nothing, absolutely nothing, was lacking to complete the likeness, so that if one were to set them side by side, nobody, absolutely nobody, could have undertaken to distinguish which was the real Mr. Golyadkin and which was the new one, which was the original and which was the copy.

Our hero was — if the comparison can be made — in the position of a man upon whom some practical joker has stealthily, by way of jest, turned a burning glass.

"What does it mean? Is it a dream?" he wondered. "Is it reality or the continuation of what happened yesterday? And besides, by what right is this all being done? Who sanctioned such a clerk, who authorized this? Am I asleep, am I in a waking dream?"

Mr. Golyadkin tried pinching himself, even tried to screw up his courage to pinch some one else . . . No, it was not a dream and that was all about it. Mr. Golyadkin felt that the sweat was trickling down him in big drops; he felt that what was happening to him was something incredible, unheard of, and for that very reason was, to complete his misery, utterly unseemly, for Mr. Golyadkin realized and felt how disadvantageous it was to be the first example of such a burlesque adventure. He even began to doubt his own existence, and though he was prepared for anything and had been longing for his doubts to be settled in any way whatever, yet the actual reality was startling in its unexpectedness. His misery was poignant and overwhelming. At times he lost all power of thought and memory. Coming to himself after such a moment, he noticed that he was mechanically and unconsciously moving the pen over the paper. Mistrustful of himself, he began going over what he had written — and could make nothing of it. At last the other Mr. Golyadkin, who had been sitting discreetly and decorously at the table, got up and disappeared through the door into the other room. Mr. Golyadkin looked around — everything was quiet; he heard nothing but the scratching of pens, the rustle of turning over pages, and conversation in the corners furthest from Andrey Filippovitch's seat. Mr. Golyadkin looked at Anton Antonovitch, and as, in all probability, our hero's countenance fully reflected his real condition and harmonized with the whole position, and was consequently, from one point of view, very remarkable, good-natured Anton Antonovitch, laying aside his pen, inquired after his health with marked sympathy.

"I'm very well, thank God, Anton Antonovitch," said Mr. Golyadkin, stammering. "I am perfectly well, Anton Antonovitch. I am all right now, Anton Antonovitch," he added uncertainly, not yet fully trusting Anton Antonovitch, whose name he had mentioned so often.

"I fancied you were not quite well: though that's not to be wondered at; no, indeed! Nowadays especially there's such a lot of illness going about. Do you know . . ."

"Yes, Anton Antonovitch, I know there is such a lot of illness . . . I did not mean that, Anton Antonovitch," Mr. Golyadkin went on, looking intently at Anton Antonovitch. "You see, Anton

Antonovitch, I don't even know how you, that is, I mean to say, how to approach this matter, Anton Antonovitch . . . ."

"How so? I really . . . do you know . . . I must confess I don't quite understand; you must . . . you must explain, you know, in what way you are in difficulties," said Anton Antonovitch, beginning to be in difficulties himself, seeing that there were actually tears in Mr. Golyadkin's eyes.

"Really, Anton Antonovitch . . . I . . . here . . . there's a clerk here, Anton Antonovitch . . ."

"Well! I don't understand now."

"I mean to say, Anton Antonovitch, there's a new clerk here."

"Yes, there is; a namesake of yours."

"What?" cried Mr. Golyadkin.

"I say a namesake of yours; his name's Golyadkin too. Isn't he a brother of yours?"

"No, Anton Antonovitch, I . . ."

"H'm! you don't say so! Why, I thought he must be a relation of yours. Do you know, there's a sort of family likeness."

Mr. Golyadkin was petrified with astonishment, and for the moment he could not speak. To treat so lightly such a horrible, unheard-of thing, a thing undeniably rare and curious in its way, a thing which would have amazed even an unconcerned spectator, to talk of a family resemblance when he could see himself as in a looking-glass!

"Do you know, Yakov Petrovitch, what I advise you to do?" Anton Antonovitch went on. "Go and consult a doctor. Do you know, you look somehow quite unwell. Your eyes look peculiar . . . you know, there's a peculiar expression in them."

"No, Anton Antonovitch, I feel, of course . . . that is, I keep wanting to ask about this clerk."

"Well?"

"That is, have not you noticed, Anton Antonovitch, something peculiar about him, something very marked?"

"That is . . .?"

"That is, I mean, Anton Antonovitch, a striking likeness with somebody, for instance; with me, for instance? You spoke just now, you see, Anton Antonovitch, of a family likeness. You let slip the remark. . . . You know there really are sometimes twins exactly alike, like two drops of water, so that they can't be told apart. Well, it's that that I mean."

"To be sure," said Anton Antonovitch, after a moment's thought, speaking as though he were struck by the fact for the first time: "yes, indeed! You are right, there is a striking likeness, and you are quite right in what you say. You really might be mistaken for one another," he went on, opening his eyes wider and

wider; "and, do you know, Yakov Petrovitch, it's positively a marvellous likeness, fantastic, in fact, as the saying is; that is, just as you . . . Have you observed, Yakov Petrovitch? I wanted to ask you to explain it; yes, I must confess I didn't take particular notice at first. It's wonderful, it's really wonderful! And, you know, you are not a native of these parts, are you, Yakov Petrovitch?"

"No."

"He is not from these parts, you know, either. Perhaps he comes from the same part of the country as you do. Where, may I make bold to inquire, did your mother live for the most part?"

"You said . . . you say, Anton Antonovitch, that he is not a native of these parts?"

"No, he is not. And indeed how strange it is!" continued the talkative Anton Antonovitch, for whom it was a genuine treat to gossip. "It may well arouse curiosity; and yet, you know, you might pass him by, brush against him, without noticing anything. But you mustn't be upset about it. It's a thing that does happen. Do you know, the same thing, I must tell you, happened to my aunt on my mother's side; she saw her own double before her death . . ."

"No, I— excuse me for interrupting you, Anton Antonovitch — I wanted to find out, Anton Antonovitch, how that clerk . . . that is, on what footing is he here?"

"In the place of Semyon Ivanovitch, to fill the vacancy left by his death; the post was vacant, so he was appointed. Do you know, I'm told poor Semyon Ivanovitch left three children, all tiny dots. The widow fell at the feet of his Excellency. They do say she's hiding something; she's got a bit of money, but she's hiding it."

"No, Anton Antonovitch, I was still referring to that circumstance."

"You mean . . .? To be sure! But why are you so interested in that? I tell you not to upset yourself. All this is temporary to some extent. Why, after all, you know, you have nothing to do with it. So it has been ordained by God Almighty, it's His will, and it is sinful repining. His wisdom is apparent in it. And as far as I can make out, Yakov Petrovitch, you are not to blame in any way. There are all sorts of strange things in the world! Mother Nature is liberal with her gifts, and you are not called upon to answer for it, you won't be responsible. Here, for instance, you have heard, I expect, of those — what's their name? — oh, the Siamese twins who are joined together at the back, live and eat and sleep together. I'm told they get a lot of money."

"Allow me, Anton Antonovitch . . ."

"I understand, I understand! Yes! But what of it? It's no matter, I tell you, ad far as I can see there's nothing for you to upset yourself about. After all, he's a clerk — as a clerk he seems to be a capable man. He says his name is Golyadkin, that he's not a native of this district, and that he's a titular councillor. He had a personal interview with his Excellency."

"And how did his Excellency . . .?"

"It was all right; I am told he gave a satisfactory account of himself, gave his reasons, said, 'It's like this, your Excellency,' and that he was without means and anxious to enter the service, and would be particularly flattered to be serving under his Excellency . . . all that was proper, you know; he expressed



himself neatly. He must be a sensible man. But of course he came with a recommendation; he couldn't have got in without that . . ."

"Oh, from whom . . . that is, I mean, who is it has had a hand in this shameful business?"

"Yes, a good recommendation, I'm told; his Excellency, I'm told laughed with Andrey Filippovitch."

"Laughed with Andrey Filippovitch?"

"Yes, he only just smiled and said that it was all right, and that he had nothing against it, so long as he did his duty . . ."

"Well, and what more? You relieve me to some extent, Anton Antonovitch; go on, I entreat you."

"Excuse me, I must tell you again . . . Well, then, come, it's nothing, it's a very simple matter; you mustn't upset yourself, I tell you, and there's nothing suspicious about it . . ."

"No. I . . . that is, Anton Antonovitch, I want to ask you, didn't his Excellency say anything more . . . about me, for instance?"

"Well! To be sure! No, nothing of the sort; you can set your mind quite at rest. You know it is, of course, a rather striking circumstance, and at first . . . why, here, I, for instance, I scarcely noticed it. I really don't know why I didn't notice it till you mentioned it. But you can set your mind at rest entirely. He said nothing particular, absolutely nothing," added good-natured Anton Antonovitch, getting up from his chair.

"So then, Anton, Antonovitch, I . . ."

"Oh, you must excuse me. Here I've been gossiping about these trivial matters, and I've business that is important and urgent. I must inquire about it."

"Anton Antonovitch!" Andrey Filippovitch's voice sounded, summoning him politely, "his Excellency has been asking for you."

"This minute, I'm coming this minute, Andrey Filippovitch." And Anton Antonovitch, taking a pile of papers, flew off first to Andrey Filippovitch and then into his Excellency's room.

"Then what is the meaning of it?" thought Mr. Golyadkin. "Is there some sort of game going on? So the wind's in that quarter now . . . That's just as well; so things have taken a much pleasanter turn," our hero said to himself, rubbing his hands, and so delighted that he scarcely knew where he was. "So our position is an ordinary thing. So it turns out to be all nonsense, it comes to nothing at all. No one has done anything really, and they are not budging, the rascals, they are sitting busy over their work; that's splendid, splendid! I like the good-natured fellow, I've always liked him, and I'm always ready to respect him . . . though it must be said one doesn't know what to think; this Anton Antonovitch . . . I'm afraid to trust him; his hair's grey, and he's getting shaky. It's an immense and glorious thing that his Excellency said nothing, and let it pass! It's a good thing! I approve! Only why does Andrey Filippovitch interfere with his grins? What's he got to do with it? The old rogue. Always on my track, always, like a black cat, on the watch to run across a man's path, always thwarting and annoying a man, always annoying and thwarting a man . . ."

Mr. Golyadkin looked around him again, and again his hopes revived. Yet he felt that he was troubled by one remote idea, an unpleasant idea. It even occurred to him that he might try somehow to make up to the clerks, to be the first in the field even (perhaps when leaving the office or going up to them as though about his work), to drop a hint in the course of conversation, saying, "This is how it is, what a striking likeness, gentlemen, a strange circumstance, a burlesque farce!" — that is, treat it all lightly, and in this way sound the depth of the danger. "Devils breed in still waters," our hero concluded inwardly.

Mr. Golyadkin, however, only contemplated this; he thought better of it in time. He realized that this would be going too far. "That's your temperament," he said to himself, tapping himself lightly on the forehead; "as soon as you gain anything you are delighted! You're a simple soul! No, you and I had better be patient, Yakov Petrovitch; let us wait and be patient!"

Nevertheless, as we have mentioned already, Mr. Golyadkin was buoyed up with the most confident hopes, feeling as though he had risen from the dead.

"No matter," he thought, "it's as though a hundred tons had been lifted off my chest! Here is a circumstance, to be sure! The box has been opened by the lid. Krylov is right, a clever chap, a rogue, that Krylov, and a great fable-write! And as for him, let him work in the office, and good luck to him so long as he doesn't meddle or interfere with any one; let him work in the office — I consent and approve!"

Meanwhile the hours were passing, flying by, and before he noticed the time it struck four. The office was closed. Andrey Filippovitch took his hat, and all followed his example in due course. Mr. Golyadkin dawdled a little on purpose, long enough to be the last to go out when all the others had gone their several ways. Going out from the street he felt as though he were in Paradise, so that he even felt inclined to go a longer way round, and to walk along the Nevsky Prospect.

"To be sure this is destiny," thought our hero, "this unexpected turn in affairs. And the weather's more cheerful, and the frost and the little sledges. And the frost suits the Russian, the Russian gets on capitally with the frost. I like the Russian. And the dear little snow, and the first few flakes in autumn; the sportsman would say, 'It would be nice to go shooting hares in the first snow.' Well, there, it doesn't matter."

This was how Mr. Golyadkin's enthusiasm found expression. Yet something was fretting in his brain, not exactly melancholy, but at times he had such a gnawing at his heart that he did not know how to find relief.

"Let us wait for the day, though, and then we shall rejoice. And, after all, you know, what does it matter? Come, let us think it over, let us look at it. Come, let us consider it, my young friend, let us consider it. Why, a man's exactly like you in the first place, absolutely the same. Well, what is there in that? If there is such a man, why should I weep over it? What is it to me? I stand aside, I whistle to myself, and that's all! That's what I laid myself open to, and that's all about it! Let him work in the office! Well, it's strange and marvellous, they say, that the Siamese twins . . . But why bring in Siamese twins? They are twins, of course, but even great men, you know, sometimes look queer creatures. In fact, we know from history that the famous Suvorov used to crow like a cock . . . But there, he did all that with political motives; and he was a great general . . . but what are generals, after all? But I keep myself to myself, that's all, and I don't care about any one else, and, secure in my innocence, I scorn my enemies. I am not one to intrigue, and I'm proud of it. Gentle, straightforward, neat and nice, meek and mild."

All at once Mr. Golyadkin broke off, his tongue failed him and he began trembling like a leaf; he even closed his eyes for a minute. Hoping, however, that the object of his terror was only an illusion, he opened his eyes at last and stole a timid glance to the right. No, it was not an illusion! . . . His acquaintance of that morning was tripping along by his side, smiling, peeping into his face, and apparently seeking an opportunity to begin a conversation with him. The conversation was not begun, however. They both walked like this for about fifty paces. All Mr. Golyadkin's efforts were concentrated on muffling himself up, hiding himself in his coat and pulling his hat down as far as possible over his eyes. To complete his mortification, his companion's coat and hat looked as though they had been taken off Mr. Golyadkin himself.

"Sir," our hero articulated at last, trying to speak almost in a whisper, and not looking at his companion, "we are going different ways, I believe . . . I am convinced of it, in fact," he said, after a pause. "I am convinced, indeed, that you quite understand me," he added, rather severely, in conclusion.

"I could have wished . . ." his companion pronounced at last, "I could have wished . . . no doubt you will be magnanimous and pardon me . . . I don't know to whom to address myself here . . . my circumstances . . . I trust you will pardon my intrusiveness. I fancied, indeed, that, moved by compassion, you showed some interest in me this morning. On my side, I felt drawn to you from the first moment. I . . ."

At this point Mr. Golyadkin inwardly wished that his companion might sink into the earth.

"If I might venture to hope that you would accord me an indulgent hearing, Yakov Petrovitch . . ."

"We — here, we — we . . . you had better come home with me," answered Mr. Golyadkin. "We will cross now to the other side of the Nevsky Prospect, it will be more convenient for us there, and then by the little back street . . . we'd better go by the back street."

"Very well, by all means let us go by the back street," our hero's meek companion responded timidly, suggesting by the tone of his reply that it was not for him to choose, and that in his position he was quite prepared to accept the back street. As for Mr. Golyadkin, he was utterly unable to grasp what was happening to him. He could not believe in himself. He could not get over his amazement.

## Chapter 7

He recovered himself a little on the staircase as he went up to his flat.

"Oh, I'm a sheep's head," he railed at himself inwardly. "Where am I taking him? I am thrusting my head into the noose. What will Petrushka think, seeing us together? What will the scoundrel dare to imagine now? He's suspicious . . ."

But it was too late to regret it. Mr. Golyadkin knocked at the door; it was opened, and Petrushka began taking off the visitor's coat as well as his master's. Mr. Golyadkin looked askance, just stealing a glance at Petrushka, trying to read his countenance and divine what he was thinking. But to his intense astonishment he saw that his servant showed no trace of surprise, but seemed, on the contrary, to be expecting something of the sort. Of course he did not look morose, as it was; he kept his eyes turned away and looked as though he would like to fall upon somebody.

"Hasn't somebody bewitched them all today?" thought our hero. "Some devil must have got round them. There certainly must be something peculiar in the whole lot of them today. Damn it all, what a worry it is!"

Such were Mr. Golyadkin's thoughts and reflections as he led his visitor into his room and politely asked him to sit down. The visitor appeared to be greatly embarrassed, he was very shy, and humbly watched every movement his host made, caught his glance, and seemed trying to divine his thoughts from them. There was a downtrodden, crushed, scared look about all his gestures, so that — if the comparison may be allowed — he was at that moment rather like the man who, having lost his clothes, is dressed up in somebody else's: the sleeves work up to the elbows, the waist is almost up to his neck, and he keeps every minute pulling down the short waistcoat; he wriggles sideways and turns away, tries to hide himself, or peeps into every face, and listens whether people are talking of his position, laughing at him or putting him to shame — and he is crimson with shame and overwhelmed with confusion and wounded vanity. . . . Mr. Golyadkin put down his hat in the window, and carelessly sent it flying to the floor. The visitor darted at once to pick it up, brushed off the dust, and carefully put it back, while he laid his own on the floor near a chair, on the edge of which he meekly seated himself. This little circumstance did something to open Mr. Golyadkin's eyes; he realized that the man was in great straits, and so did not put himself out for his visitor as he had done at first, very properly leaving all that to the man himself. The visitor, for his part, did nothing either; whether he was shy, a little ashamed, or from politeness was waiting for his host to begin is not certain and would be difficult to determine. At that moment Petrushka came in; he stood still in the doorway, and fixed his eyes in the direction furthest from where the visitor and his master were seated.

"Shall I bring in dinner for two?" he said carelessly, in a husky voice.

"I— I don't know . . . you . . . yes, bring dinner for two, my boy."

Petrushka went out. Mr. Golyadkin glanced at his visitor. The latter crimsoned to his ears. Mr. Golyadkin was a kind-hearted man, and so in the kindness of his heart he at once elaborated a theory.

"The fellow's hard up," he thought. "Yes, and in his situation only one day. Most likely he's suffered in his time. Maybe his good clothes are all that he has, and nothing to get him a dinner. Ah, poor fellow, how crushed he seems! But no matter; in a way it's better so. . . . Excuse me," began Mr. Golyadkin, "allow me to ask what I may call you."

"I . . . I . . . I'm Yakov Petrovitch," his visitor almost whispered, as though conscience-stricken and ashamed, as though apologizing for being called Yakov Petrovitch too.

"Yakov Petrovitch!" repeated our visitor, unable to conceal his confusion.

"Yes, just so. . . . The same name as yours," responded the meek visitor, venturing to smile and speak a little jocosely. But at once he drew back, assuming a very serious air, though a little disconcerted, noticing that his host was in no joking mood.

"You . . . allow me to ask you, to what am I indebted for the honour . . .?"

"Knowing your generosity and your benevolence," interposed the visitor in a rapid but timid voice, half rising from his seat, "I have ventured to appeal to you and to beg for your . . . acquaintance and protection . . ." he concluded, choosing his phrases with difficulty and trying to select words not too flattering or servile, that he might not compromise his dignity and not so bold as to suggest an

unseemly equality. In fact, one may say the visitor behaved like a gentlemanly beggar with a darned waistcoat, with an honourable passport in his pocket, who has not yet learnt by practice to hold out his hand properly for alms.

"You perplex me," answered Mr. Golyadkin, gazing round at himself, his walls and his visitor. "In what could I . . . that is, I mean, in what way could I be of service to you?"

"I felt drawn to you, Yakov Petrovitch, at first sight, and, graciously forgive me, I built my hopes Yakov Petrovitch. I . . . I'm in a desperate plight here, Yakov Petrovitch; I'm poor, I've had a great deal of trouble, Yakov Petrovitch, and have only recently come here. Learning that you, with your innate goodness and excellence of heart, are of the same name . . ."

Mr. Golyadkin frowned.

"Of the same name as myself and a native of the same district, I made up my mind to appeal to you, and to make known to you my difficult position."

"Very good, very good; I really don't know what to say," Mr. Golyadkin responded in an embarrassed voice. "We'll have a talk after dinner . . ."

The visitor bowed; dinner was brought in. Petrushka laid the table, and Mr. Golyadkin and his visitor proceeded to partake of it. The dinner did not last long, for they were both in a hurry, the host because he felt ill at ease, and was, besides, ashamed that the dinner was a poor one — he was partly ashamed because he wanted to give the visitor a good meal, and partly because he wanted to show him he did not live like a beggar. The visitor, on his side too, was in terrible confusion and extremely embarrassed. When he had finished the piece of bread he had taken, he was afraid to put out his hand to take another piece, was ashamed to help himself to the best morsels, and was continually assuring his host that he was not at all hungry, that the dinner was excellent, that he was absolutely satisfied with it, and should not forget it to his dying day. When the meal was over Mr. Golyadkin lighted his pipe, and offered a second, which was brought in, to his visitor. They sat facing each other, and the visitor began telling his adventures.

Mr. Golyadkin junior's story lasted for three or four hours. His history was, however, composed of the most trivial and wretched, if one may say so, incidents. It dealt with details of service in some lawcourt in the provinces, of prosecutors and presidents, of some department intrigues, of the depravity of some registration clerks, of an inspector, of the sudden appointment of a new chief in the department, of how the second Mr. Golyadkin had suffered quite without any fault on his part; of his aged aunt, Pelegea Semyonovna; of how, through various intrigues on the part of his enemies, he had lost his situation, and had come to Petersburg on foot; of the harassing and wretched time he had spent here in Petersburg, how for a long time he had tried in vain to get a job, had spent all his money, had nothing left, had been living almost in the street, lived on a crust of bread and washed it down with his tears, slept on the bare floor, and finally how some good Christian had exerted himself on his behalf, had given him an introduction, and had nobly got him into a new berth. Mr. Golyadkin's visitor shed tears as he told his story, and wiped his eyes with a blue-check handkerchief that looked like oilcloth. He ended by making a clean breast of it to Mr. Golyadkin, and confessing that he was not only for the time without means of subsistence and money for a decent lodging, but had not even the wherewithal to fit himself out properly, so that he had, he said in conclusion, been able to get together enough for a pair of wretched boots, and that he had had to hire a uniform for the time.

Mr. Golyadkin was melted; he was genuinely touched. Even though his visitor's story was the paltriest story, every word of it was like heavenly manna to his heart. The fact was that Mr. Golyadkin was beginning to forget his last misgivings, to surrender his soul to freedom and rejoicing, and at last mentally dubbed himself a fool. It was all so natural! And what a thing to break his heart over, what a thing to be so distressed about! To be sure there was, there really was, one ticklish circumstance — but, after all, it was not a misfortune; it could be no disgrace to a man, it could not cast a slur on his honour or ruin his career, if he were innocent, since nature herself was mixed up in it. Moreover, the visitor begged for protection, wept, railed at destiny, seemed such an artless, pitiful, insignificant person, with no craft or malice about him, and he seemed now to be ashamed himself, though perhaps on different grounds, of the strange resemblance of his countenance with that of Mr. Golyadkin's. His behaviour was absolutely unimpeachable; his one desire was to please his host, and he looked as a man looks who feels conscience-stricken and to blame in regard to some one else. If any doubtful point were touched upon, for instance, the visitor at once agreed with Mr. Golyadkin's opinion. If by mistake he advanced an opinion in opposition to Mr. Golyadkin's and afterwards noticed that he had made a slip, he immediately corrected his mistake, explained himself and made it clear that he meant the same thing as his host, that he thought as he did and took the same view of everything as he did. In fact, the visitor made every possible effort to "make up to" Mr. Golyadkin, so that the latter made up his mind at last that his visitor must be a very amiable person in every way. Meanwhile, tea was brought in; it was nearly nine o'clock. Mr. Golyadkin felt in a very good-humour, grew lively and skittish, let himself go a little, and finally plunged into a most animated and interesting conversation with his visitor. In his festive moments Mr. Golyadkin was fond of telling interesting anecdotes. So now he told the visitor a great deal about Petersburg, about its entertainments and attractions, about the theatre, the clubs, about Brulov's picture, and about the two Englishmen who came from England to Petersburg on purpose to look at the iron railing of the Summer Garden, and returned at once when they had seen it; about the office; about Olsufy Ivanovitch and Andrey Filippovitch; about the way that Russia was progressing, was hour by hour progressing towards a state of perfection, so that

"Arts and letters flourish here today";

about an anecdote he had lately read in the Northern Bee concerning a boa-constrictor in India of immense strength; about Baron Brambeus, and so on. In short, Mr. Golyadkin was quite happy, first, because his mind was at rest, secondly, because, so far from being afraid of his enemies, he was quite prepared now to challenge them all to mortal combat; thirdly, because he was now in the role of patron and was doing a good deed. Yet he was conscious at the bottom of his heart that he was not perfectly happy, that there was still a hidden worm gnawing at his heart, though it was only a tiny one. He was extremely worried by the thought of the previous evening at Olsufy Ivanovitch's. He would have given a great deal now for nothing to have happened of what took place then.

"It's no matter, though!" our hero decided at last, and he firmly resolved in his heart to behave well in future and never to be guilty of such pranks again. As Mr. Golyadkin was now completely worked up, and had suddenly become almost blissful, the fancy took him to have a jovial time. Rum was brought in by Petrushka, and punch was prepared. The visitor and his host drained a glass each, and then a second. The visitor appeared even more amiable than before, and gave more than one proof of his frankness and charming character; he entered keenly into Mr. Golyadkin's joy, seemed only to rejoice in his rejoicing, and to look upon him as his one and only benefactor. Taking up a pen and a sheet of paper, he asked Golyadkin not to look at what he was going to write, but afterwards showed his host what he had written. It turned out to be a verse of four lines, written with a good deal of feeling, in excellent language and handwriting, and evidently was the composition of the amiable visitor himself. The lines were as follows —

"If thou forget me, I shall not forget thee; Though all things may be, Do not thou forget me."

With tears in his eyes Mr. Golyadkin embraced his companion, and, completely overcome by his feelings, he began to initiate his friend into some of his own secrets and private affairs, Andrey Filippovitch and Klara Olsufyevna being prominent in his remarks.

"Well, you may be sure we shall get on together, Yakov Petrovitch," said our hero to his visitor. "You and I will take to each other like fish to the water, Yakov Petrovitch; we shall be like brothers; we'll be cunning, my dear fellow, we'll work together; we'll get up an intrigue, too, to pay them out. To pay them out we'll get up an intrigue too. And don't you trust any of them. I know you, Yakov Petrovitch, and I understand your character; you'll tell them everything straight out, you know, you're a guileless soul! You must hold aloof from them all, my boy."

His companion entirely agreed with him, thanked Mr. Golyadkin, and he, too, grew tearful at last.

"Do you know, Yasha," Mr. Golyadkin went on in a shaking voice, weak with emotion, "you must stay with me for a time, or stay with me for ever. We shall get on together. What do you say, brother, eh? And don't you worry or repine because there's such a strange circumstance about us now; it's a sin to repine, brother; it's nature! And Mother Nature is liberal with her gifts, so there, brother Yasha! It's from love for you that I speak, from brotherly love. But we'll be cunning, Yasha; we'll lay a mine, too, and we'll make them laugh out the other side of their mouths."

They reached their third and fourth glasses of punch at last, and then Mr. Golyadkin began to be aware of two sensations: the one that he was extraordinarily happy, and the other that he could not stand on his legs. The guest was, of course, invited to stay the night. A bed was somehow made up on two chairs. Mr. Golyadkin junior declared that under a friend's roof the bare floor would be a soft bed, that for his part he could sleep anywhere, humbly and gratefully; that he was in paradise now, that he had been through a great deal of trouble and grief in his time; he had seen ups and downs, had all sorts of things to put up with, and — who could tell what the future would be? — maybe he would have still more to put up with. Mr. Golyadkin senior protested against this, and began to maintain that one must put one's faith in God. His guest entirely agreed, observing that there was, of course, no one like God. At this point Mr. Golyadkin senior observed that in certain respects the Turks were right in calling upon God even in their sleep. Then, though disagreeing with certain learned professors in the slanders they had promulgated against the Turkish prophet Mahomet and recognizing him as a great politician in his own line, Mr. Golyadkin passed to a very interesting description of an Algerian barber's shop which he had read in a book of miscellanies. The friends laughed heartily at the simplicity of the Turks, but paid due tribute to their fanaticism, which they ascribed to opium. . . . At last the guest began undressing, and thinking in the kindness of his heart that very likely he hadn't even a decent shirt, Mr. Golyadkin went behind the screen to avoid embarrassing a man who had suffered enough, and partly to reassure himself as far as possible about Petrushka, to sound him, to cheer him up if he could, to be kind to the fellow so that every one might be happy and that everything might be pleasant all round. It must be remarked that Petrushka still rather bothered Mr. Golyadkin.

"You go to bed now, Pyotr," Mr. Golyadkin said blandly, going into his servant's domain; "you go to bed now and wake me up at eight o'clock. Do you understand Petrushka?"

Mr. Golyadkin spoke with exceptional softness and friendliness. But Petrushka remained mute. He was busy making his bed, and did not even turn round to face his master, which he ought to have done out of simple respect.

"Did you hear what I said, Pyotr?" Mr. Golyadkin went on. "You go to bed now and wake me tomorrow at eight o'clock; do you understand?"

"Why, I know that; what's the use of telling me?" Petrushka grumbled to himself.

"Well, that's right, Petrushka; I only mention it that you might be happy and at rest. Now we are all happy, so I want you, too, to be happy and satisfied. And now I wish you good-night. Sleep, Petrushka, sleep; we all have to work . . . Don't think anything amiss, my man . . ." Mr. Golyadkin began, but stopped short. "Isn't this too much?" he thought. "Haven't I gone too far? That's how it always is; I always overdo things."

Our hero felt much dissatisfied with himself as he left Petrushka. He was, besides, rather wounded by Petrushka's grumpiness and rudeness. "One jests with the rascal, his master does him too much honour, and the rascal does not feel it," thought Mr. Golyadkin. "But there, that's the nasty way of all that sort of people!"

Somewhat shaken, he went back to his room, and, seeing that his guest had settled himself for the night, he sat down on the edge of his bed for a minute.

"Come, you must own, Yasha," he began in a whisper, wagging his head, "you're a rascal, you know; what a way you've treated me! You see, you've got my name, do you know that?" he went on, jesting in a rather familiar way with his visitor. At last, saying a friendly good-night to him, Mr. Golyadkin began preparing for the night. The visitor meanwhile began snoring. Mr. Golyadkin in his turn got into bed, laughing and whispering to himself: "You are drunk today, my dear fellow, Yakov Petrovitch, you rascal, you old Golyadkin — what a surname to have! Why, what are you so pleased about? You'll be crying tomorrow, you know, you sniveller; what am I to do with you?"

At this point a rather strange sensation pervaded Mr. Golyadkin's whole being, something like doubt or remorse.

"I've been over-excited and let myself go," he thought; "now I've a noise in my head and I'm drunk; I couldn't restrain myself, ass that I am! and I've been babbling bushels of nonsense, and, like a rascal, I was planning to be so sly. Of course, to forgive and forget injuries is the height of virtue; but it's a bad thing, nevertheless! Yes, that is so!"

At this point Mr. Golyadkin got up, took a candle and went on tiptoe to look once more at his sleeping guest. He stood over him for a long time meditating deeply.

"An unpleasant picture! A burlesque, a regular burlesque, and that's the fact of the matter!"

At last Mr. Golyadkin settled down finally. There was a humming, a buzzing, a ringing in his head. He grew more and more drowsy . . . tried to think about something very important, some delicate question — but could not. Sleep descended upon his devoted head, and he slept as people generally do sleep who are not used to drinking and have consumed five glasses of punch at some festive gathering.



## Chapter 8

Mr. Golyadkin woke up next morning at eight o'clock as usual; as soon as he was awake he recalled all the adventures of the previous evening — and frowned as he recalled them. "Ugh, I did play the fool last night!" he thought, sitting up and glancing at his visitor's bed. But what was his amazement when he saw in the room no trace, not only of his visitor, but even of the bed on which his visitor had slept!

"What does it mean?" Mr. Golyadkin almost shrieked. "What can it be? What does this new circumstance portend?"

While Mr. Golyadkin was gazing in open-mouthed bewilderment at the empty spot, the door creaked and Petrushka came in with the tea-tray.

"Where, where?" our hero said in a voice hardly audible, pointing to the place which had been occupied by his visitor the night before.

At first Petrushka made no answer and did not look at his master, but fixed his eyes upon the corner to the right till Mr. Golyadkin felt compelled to look into that corner too. After a brief silence, however, Petrushka in a rude and husky voice answered that his master was not at home.

"You idiot; why I'm your master, Petrushka!" said Mr. Golyadkin in a breaking voice, looking open-eyed at his servant.

Petrushka made no reply, but he gave Mr. Golyadkin such a look that the latter crimsoned to his ears — looked at him with an insulting reproachfulness almost equivalent to open abuse. Mr. Golyadkin was utterly flabbergasted, as the saying is. At last Petrushka explained that the 'other one' had gone away an hour and a half ago, and would not wait. His answer, of course, sounded truthful and probable; it was evident that Petrushka was not lying; that his insulting look and the phrase the 'other one' employed by him were only the result of the disgusting circumstance with which he was already familiar, but still he understood, though dimly, that something was wrong, and that destiny had some other surprise, not altogether a pleasant one, in store for him.

"All right, we shall see," he thought to himself. "We shall see in due time; we'll get to the bottom of all this . . . Oh, Lord, have mercy upon us!" he moaned in conclusion, in quite a different voice. "And why did I invite him to what end did I do all that? Why, I am thrusting my head into their thievish noose myself; I am tying the noose with my own hands. Ach, you fool, you fool! You can't resist babbling like some silly boy, some chancery clerk, some wretched creature of no class at all, some rag, some rotten dishcloth; you're a gossip, an old woman! . . . Oh, all ye saints! And he wrote verses, the rogue, and expressed his love for me! How could . . . How can I show him the door in a polite way if he turns up again, the rogue? Of course, there are all sorts of ways and means. I can say this is how it is, my salary being so limited . . . Or scare him off in some way saying that, taking this and that into consideration, I am forced to make clear . . . that he would have to pay an equal share of the cost of board and lodging, and pay the money in advance. H'm! No, damn it all, no! That would be degrading to me. It's not quite delicate! Couldn't I do something like this: suggest to Petrushka that he should annoy him in some way, should be disrespectful, be rude, and get rid of him in that way. Set them at each other in some way. . . . No, damn it all, no! It's dangerous and again, if one looks at it from that point of view — it's not the right thing at all! Not the right thing at all! But there, even if he doesn't come, it will be a bad look-out, too! I babbled to him last night! . . . Ach, it's a bad look-out, a bad look-out! Ach, we're in a bad way! Oh, I'm a cursed fool, a cursed fool! you can't train yourself to behave as you ought, you can't conduct

yourself reasonably. Well, what if he comes and refuses. And God grant he may come! I should be very glad if he did come . . . ."

Such were Mr. Golyadkin's reflections as he swallowed his tea and glanced continually at the clock on the wall.

"It's a quarter to nine; it's time to go. And something will happen! What will there be there? I should like to know what exactly lies hidden in this — that is, the object, the aim, and the various intrigues. It would be a good thing to find out what all these people are plotting, and what will be their first step . . . ."

Mr. Golyadkin could endure it no longer. He threw down his unfinished pipe, dressed and set off for the office, anxious to ward off the danger if possible and to reassure himself about everything by his presence in person. There was danger: he knew himself that there was danger.

"We . . . will get to the bottom of it," said Mr. Golyadkin, taking off his coat and goloshes in the entry. "We'll go into all these matters immediately."

Making up his mind to act in this way, our hero put himself to rights, assumed a correct and official air, and was just about to pass into the adjoining room, when suddenly, in the very doorway, he jostled against his acquaintance of the day before, his friend and companion. Mr. Golyadkin junior seemed not to notice Mr. Golyadkin senior, though they met almost nose to nose. Mr. Golyadkin junior seemed to be busy, to be hastening somewhere, was breathless; he had such an official, such a business-like air that it seemed as though any one could read his face: 'Entrusted with a special commission.' . . .

"Oh, it's you, Yakov Petrovitch!" said our hero, clutching the hand of his last night's visitor.

"Presently, presently, excuse me, tell me about it afterwards," cried Mr. Golyadkin junior, dashing on.

"But, excuse me; I believe, Yakov Petrovitch, you wanted . . . ."

"What is it? Make haste and explain."

At this point his visitor of the previous night halted as though reluctantly and against his will, and put his ear almost to Mr. Golyadkin's nose.

"I must tell you, Yakov Petrovitch, that I am surprised at your behaviour . . . behaviour which seemingly I could not have expected at all."

"There's a proper form for everything. Go to his Excellency's secretary and then appeal in the proper way to the directors of the office. Have you got your petition?"

"You . . . I really don't know Yakov Petrovitch! You simply amaze me, Yakov Petrovitch! You certainly don't recognize me or, with characteristic gaiety, you are joking."

"Oh, it's you," said Mr. Golyadkin junior, seeming only now to recognize Mr. Golyadkin senior. "So, it's you? Well, have you had a good night?"

Then smiling a little — a formal and conventional smile, by no means the sort of smile that was befitting (for, after all, he owed a debt of gratitude to Mr. Golyadkin senior) — smiling this formal and

conventional smile, Mr. Golyadkin junior added that he was very glad Mr. Golyadkin senior had had a good night; then he made a slight bow and shuffling a little with his feet, looked to the right, and to the left, then dropped his eyes to the floor, made for the side door and muttering in a hurried whisper that he had a special commission, dashed into the next room. He vanished like an apparition.

"Well, this is queer!" muttered our hero, petrified for a moment; "this is queer! This is a strange circumstance."

At this point Mr. Golyadkin felt as though he had pins and needles all over him.

"However," he went on to himself, as he made his way to his department, "however, I spoke long ago of such a circumstance: I had a presentiment long ago that he had a special commission. Why, I said yesterday that the man must certainly be employed on some special commission."

"Have you finished copying out the document you had yesterday, Yakov Petrovitch," Anton Antonovitch Syetotchkin asked Mr. Golyadkin, when the latter was seated beside him. "Have you got it here?"

"Yes," murmured Mr. Golyadkin, looking at the head clerk with a rather helpless glance.

"That's right! I mention it because Andrey Filippovitch has asked for it twice. I'll be bound his Excellency wants it . . ."

"Yes, it's finished. . ."

"Well, that's all right then."

"I believe, Anton Antonovitch, I have always performed my duties properly. I'm always scrupulous over the work entrusted to me by my superiors, and I attend to it conscientiously."

"Yes. Why, what do you mean by that?"

"I mean nothing, Anton Antonovitch. I only want to explain, Anton Antonovitch, that I . . . that is, I meant to express that spite and malice sometimes spare no person whatever in their search for their daily and revolting food . . ."

"Excuse me, I don't quite understand you. What person are you alluding to?"

"I only meant to say, Anton Antonovitch, that I'm seeking the straight path and I scorn going to work in a roundabout way. That I am not one to intrigue, and that, if I may be allowed to say so, I may very justly be proud of it . . ."

"Yes. That's quite so, and to the best of my comprehension I thoroughly endorse your remarks; but allow me to tell you, Yakov Petrovitch, that personalities are not quite permissible in good society, that I, for instance, am ready to put up with anything behind my back — for every one's abused behind his back — but to my face, if you please, my good sir, I don't allow any one to be impudent. I've grown grey in the government service, sir, and I don't allow any one to be impudent to me in my old age . . ."

"No, Anton Antonovitch . . . you see, Anton Antonovitch . . . you haven't quite caught my meaning. To be sure, Anton Antonovitch, I for my part could only think it an honour . . ."

"Well, then, I ask pardon too. We've been brought up in the old school. And it's too late for us to learn your new-fangled ways. I believe we've had understanding enough for the service of our country up to now. As you are aware, sir, I have an order of merit for twenty-five years' irreproachable service . . ."

"I feel it, Anton Antonovitch, on my side, too, I quite feel all that. But I didn't mean that, I am speaking of a mask, Anton Antonovitch . . ."

"A mask?"

"Again you . . . I am apprehensive that you are taking this, too, in a wrong sense, that is the sense of my remarks, as you say yourself, Anton Antonovitch. I am simply enunciating a theory, that is, I am advancing the idea, Anton Antonovitch, that persons who wear a mask have become far from uncommon, and that nowadays it is hard to recognize the man beneath the mask . . ."

"Well, do you know, it's not altogether so hard. Sometimes it's fairly easy. Sometimes one need not go far to look for it."

"No, you know, Anton Antonovitch, I say, I say of myself, that I, for instance, do not put on a mask except when there is need of it; that is simply at carnival time or at some festive gathering, speaking in the literal sense; but that I do not wear a mask before people in daily life, speaking in another less obvious sense. That's what I meant to say, Anton Antonovitch."

"Oh, well, but we must drop all this, for now I've no time to spare," said Anton Antonovitch, getting up from his seat and collecting some papers in order to report upon them to his Excellency. "Your business, as I imagine, will be explained in due course without delay. You will see for yourself whom you should censure and whom you should blame, and thereupon I humbly beg you to spare me from further explanations and arguments which interfere with my work . . ."

"No, Anton Antonovitch," Mr. Golyadkin, turning a little pale, began to the retreating figure of Anton Antonovitch; "I had no intention of the kind."

"What does it mean?" our hero went on to himself, when he was left alone; "what quarter is the wind in now, and what is one to make of this new turn?"

At the very time when our bewildered and half-crushed hero was setting himself to solve this new question, there was a sound of movement and bustle in the next room, the door opened and Andrey Filippovitch, who had been on some business in his Excellency's study, appeared breathless in the doorway, and called to Mr. Golyadkin. Knowing what was wanted and anxious not to keep Andrey Filippovitch waiting, Mr. Golyadkin leapt up from his seat, and as was fitting immediately bustled for all he was worth getting the manuscript that was required finally neat and ready and preparing to follow the manuscript and Andrey Filippovitch into his Excellency's study. Suddenly, almost slipping under the arm of Andrey Filippovitch, who was standing right in the doorway, Mr. Golyadkin junior darted into the room in breathless haste and bustle, with a solemn and resolutely official air; he bounded straight up to Mr. Golyadkin senior, who was expecting nothing less than such a visitation.

"The papers, Yakov Petrovitch, the papers . . . his Excellency has been pleased to ask for them; have you got them ready?" Mr. Golyadkin senior's friend whispered in a hurried undertone. "Andrey Filippovitch is waiting for you . . ."

"I know he is waiting without your telling me," said Mr. Golyadkin senior, also in a hurried whisper.

"No, Yakov Petrovitch, I did not mean that; I did not mean that at all, Yakov Petrovitch, not that at all; I sympathise with you, Yakov Petrovitch, and am humbly moved by genuine interest."

"Which I most humbly beg you to spare me. Allow me, allow me . . ."

"You'll put it in an envelope, of course, Yakov Petrovitch, and you'll put a mark in the third page; allow me, Yakov Petrovitch . . ."

"You allow me, if you please . . ."

"But, I say, there's a blot here, Yakov Petrovitch; did you know there was a blot here? . . ."

At this point Andrey Filippovitch called Yakov Petrovitch a second time.

"One moment, Andrey Filippovitch, I'm only just . . . Do you understand Russian, sir?"

"It would be best to take it out with a penknife, Yakov Petrovitch. You had better rely upon me; you had better not touch it yourself, Yakov Petrovitch, rely upon me — I'll do it with a penknife . . ."

Andrey Filippovitch called Mr. Golyadkin a third time.

"But, allow me, where's the blot? I don't think there's a blot at all."

"It's a huge blot. Here it is! Here, allow me, I saw it here . . . you just let me, Yakov Petrovitch, I'll just touch it with the penknife, I'll scratch it out with the penknife from true-hearted sympathy. There, like this; see, it's done."

At this point, and quite unexpectedly, Mr. Golyadkin junior overpowered Mr. Golyadkin senior in the momentary struggle that had arisen between them, and so, entirely against the latter's will, suddenly, without rhyme or reason, took possession of the document required by the authorities, and instead of scratching it out with the penknife in true-hearted sympathy as he had perfidiously promised Mr. Golyadkin senior, hurriedly rolled it up, put it under his arm, in two bounds was beside Andrey Filippovitch, who noticed none of his manoeuvres, and flew with the latter into the Director's room. Mr. Golyadkin remained as though rivetted to the spot, holding the penknife in his hand and apparently on the point of scratching something out with it . . .

Our hero could not yet grasp his new position. He could not at once recover himself. He felt the blow, but thought that it was somehow all right. In terrible, indescribable misery he tore himself at last from his seat, rushed straight to the Director's room, imploring heaven on the way that it would be all right . . . In the furthest most room, which adjoined the Director's private room, he ran straight upon Andrey Filippovitch in company with his namesake. Both of them moved aside. Andrey Filippovitch was talking with a good-humoured smile, Mr. Golyadkin senior's namesake was smiling, too, fawning upon Andrey Filippovitch and tripping about at a respectful distance from him, and was whispering something in his ear with a delighted air, to which Andrey Filippovitch assented with a gracious nod. In a flash our hero grasped the whole position. The fact was that the work had surpassed his Excellency's expectations (as he learnt afterwards) and was finished punctually by the time it was needed. His Excellency was extremely pleased with it. It was even said that his excellency had said "Thank you" to Mr. Golyadkin junior, had thanked him warmly, had said that he would remember it on occasion and would never forget it. . . . Of course, the first thing Mr. Golyadkin did was to protest, to protest with the utmost vigour of which he was capable. Pale as death, and hardly knowing what he was doing, he rushed up to

Andrey Filippovitch. But the latter, hearing that Mr. Golyadkin's business was a private matter, refused to listen, observing firmly that he had not a minute to spare for his own affairs.

The curtness of his tone and his refusal struck Mr. Golyadkin.

"I had better, perhaps, try in another quarter . . . I had better appeal to Anton Antonovitch."

But to his disappointment Anton Antonovitch was not available either: he, too, was busy over something somewhere!

"Ah, it was not without design that he asked me to spare him explanation and discussion!" thought our hero. "This was what the old rogue had in his mind! In that case I shall simply make bold to approach his Excellency."

Still pale and feeling that his brain was in a complete ferment, greatly perplexed as to what he ought to decide to do, Mr. Golyadkin sat down on the edge of the chair. "It would have been a great deal better if it had all been just nothing," he kept incessantly thinking to himself. "Indeed, such a mysterious business was utterly improbable. In the first place, it was nonsense, and secondly it could not happen. Most likely it was imagination, or something else happened, and not what really did happen; or perhaps I went myself . . . and somehow mistook myself for some one else . . . in short, it's an utterly impossible thing."

Mr. Golyadkin had no sooner made up his mind that it was an utterly impossible thing that Mr. Golyadkin junior flew into the room with papers in both hands as well as under his arm. Saying two or three words about business to Andrey Filippovitch as he passed, exchanging remarks with one, polite greetings with another, and familiarities with a third, Mr. Golyadkin junior, having apparently no time to waste, seemed on the point of leaving the room, but luckily for Mr. Golyadkin senior he stopped near the door to say a few words as he passed two or three clerks who were at work there. Mr. Golyadkin senior rushed straight at him. As soon as Mr. Golyadkin junior saw Mr. Golyadkin senior's movement he began immediately, with great uneasiness, looking about him to make his escape. but our hero already held his last night's guest by the sleeve. The clerks surrounding the two titular councillors stepped back and waited with curiosity to see what would happen. The senior titular councillor realized that public opinion was not on his side, he realized that they were intriguing against him: which made it all the more necessary to hold his own now. The moment was a decisive one.

"Well!" said Mr. Golyadkin junior, looking rather impatiently at Mr. Golyadkin senior.

The latter could hardly breathe.

"I don't know," he began, "in what way to make plain to you the strangeness of your behaviour, sir."

"Well. Go on." At this point Mr. Golyadkin junior turned round and winked to the clerks standing round, as though to give them to understand that a comedy was beginning.

"The impudence and shamelessness of your manners with me, sir, in the present case, unmasks your true character . . . better than any words of mine could do. Don't rely on your trickery: it is worthless . . ."

"Come, Yakov Petrovitch, tell me now, how did you spend the night?" answered Mr. Golyadkin junior, looking Mr. Golyadkin senior straight in the eye.

"You forget yourself, sir," said the titular councillor, completely flabbergasted, hardly able to feel the floor under his feet. "I trust that you will take a different tone . . ."

"My darling!" exclaimed Mr. Golyadkin junior, making a rather unseemly grimace at Mr. Golyadkin senior, and suddenly, quite unexpectedly, under the pretence of caressing him, he pinched his chubby cheek with two fingers.

Our hero grew as hot as fire . . . As soon as Mr. Golyadkin junior noticed that his opponent, quivering in every limb, speechless with rage, as red as a lobster, and exasperated beyond all endurance, might actually be driven to attack him, he promptly and in the most shameless way hastened to be beforehand with his victim. Patting him two or three times on the cheek, tickling him two or three times, playing with him for a few seconds in this way while his victim stood rigid and beside himself with fury to the no little diversion of the young men standing round, Mr. Golyadkin junior ended with a most revolting shamelessness by giving Mr. Golyadkin senior a poke in his rather prominent stomach, and with a most venomous and suggestive smile said to him: "You're mischievous brother Yakov, you are mischievous! We'll be sly, you and I, Yakov Petrovitch, we'll be sly."

Then, and before our hero could gradually come to himself after the last attack, Mr. Golyadkin junior (with a little smile beforehand to the spectators standing round) suddenly assumed a most businesslike, busy and official air, dropped his eyes to the floor and, drawing himself in, shrinking together, and pronouncing rapidly "on a special commission" he cut a caper with his short leg, and darted away into the next room. Our hero could not believe his eyes and was still unable to pull himself together. . .

At last he roused himself. Recognizing in a flash that he was ruined, in a sense annihilated, that he had disgraced himself and sullied his reputation, that he had been turned into ridicule and treated with contempt in the presence of spectators, that he had been treacherously insulted, by one whom he had looked on only the day before as his greatest and most trustworthy friend, that he had been put to utter confusion, Mr. Golyadkin senior rushed in pursuit of his enemy. At the moment he would not even think of the witnesses of his ignominy.

"They're all in a conspiracy together," he said to himself; "they stand by each other and set each other on to attack me." After taking a dozen steps, however, our hero perceived clearly that all pursuit would be vain and useless, and so he turned back. "You won't get away," he thought, "you will get caught one day; the wolf will have to pay for the sheep's tears."

With ferocious composure and the most resolute determination Mr. Golyadkin went up to his chair and sat down upon it. "You won't escape," he said again.

Now it was not a question of passive resistance: there was determination and pugnacity in the air, and any one who had seen how Mr. Golyadkin at that moment, flushed and scarcely able to restrain his excitement, stabbed his pen into the inkstand and with what fury he began scribbling on the paper, could be certain beforehand that the matter would not pass off like this, and could not end in a simple, womanish way. In the depth of his soul he formed a resolution, and in the depth of his heart swore to carry it out. To tell the truth he still did not quite know how to act, or rather did not know at all, but never mind, that did not matter!

"Imposture and shamelessness do not pay nowadays, sir. Imposture and shamelessness, sir, lead to no good, but lead to the halter. Grishka Otrepyov was the only one, sir, who gained by imposture, deceiving the blind people and even that not for long."

In spite of this last circumstance Mr. Golyadkin proposed to wait till such time as the mask should fall from certain persons and something should be made manifest. For this it was necessary, in the first place, that office hours should be over as soon as possible, and till then our hero proposed to take no step. He knew then how he must act after taking that step, how to arrange his whole plan of action, to abase the horn of arrogance and crush the snake gnawing the dust in contemptible impotence. To allow himself to be treated like a rag used for wiping dirty boots, Mr. Golyadkin could not. He could not consent to that, especially in the present case. Had it not been for that last insult, our hero might have, perhaps, brought himself to control his anger; he might, perhaps, have been silent, have submitted and not have protested too obstinately; he would just have disputed a little, have made a slight complaint, have proved that he was in the right, then he would have given way a little, then, perhaps, he would have given way a little more, then he would have come round altogether, then, especially when the opposing party solemnly admitted that he was right, perhaps, he would have overlooked it completely, would even have been a little touched, there might even, perhaps — who could tell — spring up a new, close, warm friendship, on an even broader basis than the friendship of last night, so that this friendship might, in the end, completely eclipse the unpleasantness of the rather unseemly resemblance of the two individuals, so that both the titular councillors might be highly delighted, and might go on living till they were a hundred, and so on. To tell the whole truth, Mr. Golyadkin began to regret a little that he had stood up for himself and his rights, and had at once come in for unpleasantness in consequence.

"Should he give in," thought Mr. Golyadkin, "say he was joking, I would forgive him. I would forgive him even more if he would acknowledge it aloud. but I won't let myself be treated like a rag. And I have not allowed even persons very different from him to treat me so, still less will I permit a depraved person to attempt it. I am not a rag. I am not a rag, sir!"

In short, our hero made up his mind "You're in fault yourself, sir!" he thought. He made up his mind to protest with all his might to the very last. That was the sort of man he was! He could not consent to allow himself to be insulted, still less to allow himself to be treated as a rag, and, above all, to allow a thoroughly vicious man to treat him so. No quarrelling, however, no quarrelling! Possibly if some one wanted, if some one, for instance, actually insisted on turning Mr. Golyadkin into rag, he might have done so, might have done so without opposition or punishment (Mr. Golyadkin was himself conscious of this at times), and he would have been a rag and not Golyadkin — yes, a nasty, filthy rag; but that rag would not have been a simple rag, it would have been a rag possessed of dignity, it would have been a rag possessed of feelings and sentiments, even though dignity was defenceless and feelings could not assert themselves, and lay hidden deep down in the filthy folds of the rag, still these feelings were there .

..

The hours dragged on incredibly slowly; at last it struck four. Soon after, all got up and, following the head of the department, moved each on his homeward way. Mr. Golyadkin mingled with the crowd; he kept a vigilant look out, and did not lose sight of the man he wanted. At last our hero saw that his friend ran up to the office attendants who handed the clerks their overcoats, and hung about near them waiting for his in his usual nasty way. The minute was a decisive one. Mr. Golyadkin forced his way somehow through the crowd and, anxious not to be left behind, he, too, began fussing about his overcoat. But Mr. Golyadkin's friend and companion was given his overcoat first because on this occasion, too, he had succeeded, as he always did, in making up to them, whispering something to them, cringing upon them and getting round them.

After putting on his overcoat, Mr. Golyadkin junior glanced ironically at Mr. Golyadkin senior, acting in this way openly and defiantly, looked about him with his characteristic insolence, finally he tripped to and fro among the other clerks — no doubt in order to leave a good impression on them — said a word to one, whispered something to another, respectfully accosted a third, directed a smile at a fourth, gave his hand to a fifth, and gaily darted downstairs. Mr. Golyadkin senior flew after him, and to his



inexpressible delight overtook him on the last step, and seized him by the collar of his overcoat. It seemed as though Mr. Golyadkin junior was a little disconcerted, and he looked about him with a helpless air.

"What do you mean by this?" he whispered to Mr. Golyadkin at last, in a weak voice.

"Sir, if you are a gentleman, I trust that you remember our friendly relations yesterday," said our hero.

"Ah, yes! Well? Did you sleep well?"

Fury rendered Mr. Golyadkin senior speechless for a moment.

"I slept well, sir . . . but allow me to tell you, sir, that you are playing a very complicated game . . ."

"Who says so? My enemies say that," answered abruptly the man who called himself Mr. Golyadkin, and saying this, he unexpectedly freed himself from the feeble hand of the real Mr. Golyadkin. As soon as he was free he rushed away from the stairs, looked around him, saw a cab, ran up to it, got in, and in one moment vanished from Mr. Golyadkin senior's sight. The despairing titular councillor, abandoned by all, gazed about him, but there was no other cab. He tried to run, but his legs gave way under him. With a look of open-mouthed astonishment on his countenance, feeling crushed and shrivelled up, he leaned helplessly against a lamp post, and remained so for some minutes in the middle of the pavement. It seemed as though all were over for Mr. Golyadkin.

## Chapter 9

Everything, apparently, and even nature itself, seemed up in arms against Mr. Golyadkin; but he was still on his legs and unconquered; he felt that he was unconquered. He was ready to struggle. He rubbed his hands with such feeling and such energy when he recovered from his first amazement that it could be deduced from his very air that he would not give in. yet the danger was imminent; it was evident; Mr. Golyadkin felt it; but how to grapple with it, with this danger? — that was the question. the thought even flashed through Mr. Golyadkin's mind for a moment, "After all, why not leave it so, simply give up? Why, what is it? Why, it's nothing. I'll keep apart as though it were not I," thought Mr. Golyadkin. "I'll let it all pass; it's not I, and that's all about it; he's separate too, maybe he'll give it up too; he'll hang about, the rascal, he'll hang about. He'll come back and give it up again. Than's how it will be! I'll take it meekly. And, indeed, where is the danger? Come, what danger is there? I should like any one to tell me where the danger lies in this business. It is a trivial affair. An everyday affair . . ."

At this point Mr. Golyadkin's tongue failed; the words died away on his lips; he even swore at himself for this thought; he convicted himself on the spot of abjectness, of cowardice for having this thought; things were no forwarder, however. He felt that to make up his mind to some course of action was absolutely necessary for him at the moment; he even felt that he would have given a great deal to any one who could have told him what he must decide to do. Yes, but how could he guess what? Though, indeed, he had no time to guess. In any case, that he might lose no time he took a cab and dashed home.

"Well? What are you feeling now?" he wondered; "what are you graciously pleased to be thinking of, Yakov Petrovitch? What are you doing? What are you doing now, you rogue, you rascal? You've brought yourself to this plight, and now you are weeping and whimpering!"

So Mr. Golyadkin taunted himself as he jolted along in the vehicle. To taunt himself and so to irritate his wounds was, at this time, a great satisfaction to Mr. Golyadkin, almost a voluptuous enjoyment.

"Well," he thought, "if some magician were to turn up now, or if it could come to pass in some official way and I were told: 'Give a finger of your right hand, Golyadkin — and it's a bargain with you; there shall not be the other Golyadkin, and you will be happy, only you won't have your finger' — yes, I would sacrifice my finger, I would certainly sacrifice it, I would sacrifice it without winking. . . . The devil take it all!" the despairing titular councillor cried at last. "Why, what is it all for? Well, it all had to be; yes, it absolutely had to; yes, just this had to be, as though nothing else were possible! And it was all right at first. Every one was pleased and happy. But there, it had to be! There's nothing to be gained by talking, though; you must act."

And so, almost resolved upon some action, Mr. Golyadkin reached home, and without a moment's delay snatched up his pipe and, sucking at it with all his might and puffing out clouds of smoke to right and to left, he began pacing up and down the room in a state of violent excitement. Meanwhile, Petrushka began laying the table. At last Mr. Golyadkin made up his mind completely, flung aside his pipe, put on his overcoat, said he would not dine at home and ran out of the flat. Petrushka, panting, overtook him on the stairs, bringing the hat he had forgotten. Mr. Golyadkin took his hat, wanted to say something incidentally to justify himself in Petrushka's eyes that the latter might not think anything particular, such as, "What a queer circumstance! here he forgot his hat — and so on," but as Petrushka walked away at once and would not even look at him, Mr. Golyadkin put on his hat without further explanation, ran downstairs, and repeating to himself that perhaps everything might be for the best, and that affairs would somehow be arranged, though he was conscious among other things of a cold chill right down to his heels, he went out into the street, took a cab and hastened to Andrey Filippovitch's.

"Would it not be better tomorrow, though?" thought Mr. Golyadkin, as he took hold of the bell-rope of Andrey Filippovitch's flat. "And, besides, what can I say in particular? There is nothing particular in it. It's such a wretched affair, yes, it really is wretched, paltry, yes, that is, almost a paltry affair . . . yes, that's what it is, the incident . . . Suddenly Mr. Golyadkin pulled at the bell; the bell rang; footsteps were heard within . . . Mr. Golyadkin cursed himself on the spot for his hastiness and audacity. His recent unpleasant experiences, which he had almost forgotten over his work, and his encounter with Andrey Filippovitch immediately came back into his mind. But by now it was too late to run away: the door opened. Luckily for Mr. Golyadkin he was informed that Andrey Filippovitch had not returned from the office and had not dined at home.

"I know where he dines: he dines near the Ismailovsky Bridge," thought our hero; and he was immensely relieved. To the footman's inquiry what message he would leave, he said: "It's all right, my good man, I'll look in later," and he even ran downstairs with a certain cheerful briskness. Going out into the street, he decided to dismiss the cab and paid the driver. When the man asked for something extra, saying he had been waiting in the street and had not spared his horse for his honour, he gave him five kopecks extra, and even willingly; and then walked on.

"It really is such a thing," thought Mr. Golyadkin, "that it cannot be left like that; though, if one looks at it that way, looks at it sensibly, why am I hurrying about here, in reality? Well, yes, though, I will go on discussing why I should take a lot of trouble; why I should rush about, exert myself, worry myself and wear myself out. To begin with, the thing's done and there's no recalling it . . . of course, there's no recalling it! Let us put it like this: a man turns up with a satisfactory reference, said to be a capable clerk, of good conduct, only he is a poor man and has suffered many reverses — all sorts of ups and downs — well, poverty is not a crime: so I must stand aside. Why, what nonsense it is! Well, he came; he is so made, the man is so made by nature itself that he is as like another man as though they were two drops of water, as though he were a perfect copy of another man; how could they refuse to take him into the department on that account? If it is fate, if it is only fate, if it only blind chance that is to blame — is he to be treated like a rag, is he to be refused a job in the office? . . . Why, what would become of justice after that? He is a poor man, hopeless, downcast; it makes one's heart ache: compassion bids one care

for him! Yes! There's no denying, there would be a fine set of head officials, if they took the same view as a reprobate like me! What an addlepate I am! I have foolishness enough for a dozen! Yes, yes! They did right, and many thanks to them for being good to a poor, luckless fellow . . . Why, let us imagine for a moment that we are twins, that we had been born twin brothers, and nothing else — there it is! Well, what of it? Why, nothing! All the clerks can get used to it . . . And an outsider, coming into our office, would certainly find nothing unseemly or offensive in the circumstance. In fact, there is really something touching it; to think that the divine Providence created two men exactly alike, and the heads of the department, seeing the divine handiwork, provided for two twins. It would, of course," Mr. Golyadkin went on, drawing a breath and dropping his voice, "it would, of course . . . it would, of course, have been better if there had been . . . if there had been nothing of this touching kindness, and if there had been no twins either . . . The devil take it all! And what need was there for it? And what was the particular necessity that admitted of no delay! My goodness! The devil has made a mess of it! Besides, he has such a character, too, he's of such a playful, horrid disposition — he's such a scoundrel, he's such a nimble fellow! He's such a toady! Such a lickspittle! He's such a Golyadkin! I daresay he will misconduct himself; yes, he'll disgrace my name, the blackguard! And now I have to look after him and wait upon him! What an infliction! But, after all, what of it? It doesn't matter. Granted, he's a scoundrel, well, let him be a scoundrel, but to make up for it, the other one's honest; so he will be a scoundrel and I'll be honest, and they'll say that this Golyadkin's a rascal, don't take any notice of him, and don't mix him up with the other; but the other one's honest, virtuous, mild, free from malice, always to be relied upon in the service, and worthy of promotion; that's how it is, very good . . . but what if . . . what if they get us mixed up! . . . He is equal to anything! Ah, Lord, have mercy upon us! . . . He will counterfeit a man, he will counterfeit him, the rascal — he will change one man for another as though he were a rag, and not reflect that a man is not a rag. Ach, mercy on us! Ough, what a calamity!" . . .

Reflecting and lamenting in this way, Mr. Golyadkin ran on, regardless of where he was going. He came to his senses in Nevsky Prospect, only owing to the chance that he ran so neatly full-tilt into a passer-by that he saw stars in his eyes. Mr. Golyadkin muttered his excuses without raising his head, and it was only after the passer-by, muttering something far from flattering, had walked a considerable distance away, that he raised his nose and looked about to see where he was and how he had got there. Noticing when he did so that he was close to the restaurant in which he had sat for a while before the dinner-party at Olsufy Ivanovitch's, our hero was suddenly conscious of a pinching and nipping sensation in his stomach; he remembered that he had not dined; he had no prospect of a dinner-party anywhere. And so, without losing precious time, he ran upstairs into the restaurant to have a snack of something as quickly as possible, and to avoid delay by making all the haste he could. And though everything in the restaurant was rather dear, that little circumstance did not on this occasion make Mr. Golyadkin pause, and, indeed, he had no time to pause over such a trifle. In the brightly lighted room the customers were standing in rather a crowd round the counter, upon which lay heaps of all sorts of such edibles as are eaten by well-bred person's at lunch. The waiter scarcely had time to fill glasses, to serve, to take money and give change. Mr. Golyadkin waited for his turn and modestly stretched out his hand for a savoury patty. Retreating into a corner, turning his back on the company and eating with appetite, he went back to the attendant, put down his plate and, knowing the price, took out a ten-kopeck piece and laid the coin on the counter, catching the waiter's eye as though to say, "Look, here's the money, one pie," and so on.

"One rouble ten kopecks is your bill," the waiter filtered through his teeth.

Mr. Golyadkin was a good deal surprised.

"You are speaking to me? . . . I . . . I took one pie, I believe."

"You've had eleven," the man said confidently.

"You . . . so it seems to me . . . I believe, you're mistaken . . . I really took only one pie, I think."

"I counted them; you took eleven. Since you've had them you must pay for them; we don't give anything away for nothing."

Mr. Golyadkin was petrified. "What sorcery is this, what is happening to me?" he wondered. Meanwhile, the man waited for Mr. Golyadkin to make up his mind; people crowded round Mr. Golyadkin; he was already feeling in his pocket for a silver rouble, to pay the full amount at once, to avoid further trouble. "Well, if it was eleven, it was eleven," he thought, turning as red as a lobster. "Why, a man's hungry, so he eats eleven pies; well, let him eat, and may it do him good; and there's nothing to wonder at in that, and there's nothing to laugh at . . ."

At that moment something seemed to stab Mr. Golyadkin. He raised his eyes and — at once he guessed the riddle. He knew what the sorcery was. All his difficulties were solved . . .

In the doorway of the next room, almost directly behind the waiter and facing Mr. Golyadkin, in the doorway which, till that moment, our hero had taken for a looking-glass, a man was standing — he was standing, Mr. Golyadkin was standing — not the original Mr. Golyadkin, the hero of our story, but the other Mr. Golyadkin, the new Mr. Golyadkin. The second Mr. Golyadkin was apparently in excellent spirits. He smiled to Mr. Golyadkin the first, nodded to him, winked, shuffled his feet a little, and looked as though in another minute he would vanish, would disappear into the next room, and then go out, maybe, by a back way out; and there it would be, and all pursuit would be in vain. In his hand he had the last morsel of the tenth pie, and before Mr. Golyadkin's very eyes he popped it into his mouth and smacked his lips.

"He had impersonated me, the scoundrel!" thought Mr. Golyadkin, flushing hot with shame. "He is not ashamed of the publicity of it! Do they see him? I fancy no one notices him . . ."

Mr. Golyadkin threw down his rouble as though it burnt his fingers, and without noticing the waiter's insolently significant grin, a smile of triumph and serene power, he extricated himself from the crowd, and rushed away without looking round. "We must be thankful that at least he has not completely compromised anyone!" thought Mr. Golyadkin senior. "We must be thankful to him, the brigand, and to fate, that everything was satisfactorily settled. The waiter was rude, that was all. But, after all, he was in the right. One rouble and ten kopecks were owing: so he was in the right. 'We don't give things away for nothing,' he said! Though he might have been more polite, the rascal . . ."

All this Mr. Golyadkin said to himself as he went downstairs to the entrance, but on the last step he stopped suddenly, as though he had been shot, and suddenly flushed till the tears came into his eyes at the insult to his dignity. After standing stockstill for half a minute, he stamped his foot, resolutely, at one bound leapt from the step into the street and, without looking round, rushed breathless and unconscious of fatigue back home, without changing his coat, though it was his habit to change into an old coat at home, without even stopping to take his pipe, he sat down on the sofa, drew the inkstand towards him, took up a pen, got a sheet of notepaper, and with a hand that trembled from inward excitement, began scribbling the following epistle,

"Dear Sir Yakov Petrovitch!

"I should not take up my pen if my circumstances, and your own action, sir, had not compelled me to that step. Believe me that nothing but necessity would have induced me to enter upon such a discussion with you and therefore, first of all, I beg you, sir, to look upon this step of mine not as a premeditated

design to insult you, but as the inevitable consequence of the circumstance that is a bond between us now."

("I think that's all right, proper courteous, though not lacking in force and firmness . . . I don't think there is anything for him to take offence at. Besides, I'm fully within my rights," thought Mr. Golyadkin, reading over what he had written.)

"Your strange and sudden appearance, sir, on a stormy night, after the coarse and unseemly behaviour of my enemies to me, for whom I feel too much contempt even to mention their names, was the starting-point of all the misunderstanding existing between us at the present time. Your obstinate desire to persist in your course of action, sir, and forcibly to enter the circle of my existence and all my relations in practical life, transgresses every limit imposed by the merest politeness and every rule of civilized society. I imagine there is no need, sir, for me to refer to the seizure by you of my papers, and particularly to your taking away my good name, in order to gain the favour of my superiors — favour you have not deserved. There is no need to refer here either to your intentional and insulting refusal of the necessary explanation in regard to us. Finally, to omit nothing, I will not allude here to your last strange, one may even say, your incomprehensible behaviour to me in the coffee-house. I am far from lamenting over the needless — for me — loss of a rouble; but I cannot help expressing my indignation at the recollection of your public outrage upon me, to the detriment of my honour, and what is more, in the presence of several persons of good breeding, though not belonging to my circle of acquaintance."

("Am I not going too far?" thought Mr. Golyadkin. "Isn't it too much; won't it be too insulting — that taunt about good breeding, for instance? . . . But there, it doesn't matter! I must show him the resoluteness of my character. I might, however, to soften him, flatter him, and butter him up at the end. But there, we shall see.")

"But I should not weary you with my letter, sir, if I were not firmly convinced that the nobility of your sentiments and your open, candid character would suggest to you yourself a means for retrieving all lapses and returning everything to its original position.

"With full confidence I venture to rest assured that you will not take my letter in a sense derogatory to yourself, and at the same time that you will not refuse to explain yourself expressly on this occasion by letter, sending the same by my man.

"In expectation of your reply, I have the honour, dear sir, to remain,

"Your humble servant,

"Y. Golyadkin."

"Well, that is quite all right. The thing's done, it has come to letter-writing. But who is to blame for that? He is to blame himself: by his own action he reduces a man to the necessity of resorting to epistolary composition. And I am within my rights . . ."

Reading over his letter for the last time, Mr. Golyadkin folded it up, sealed it and called Petrushka. Petrushka came in looking, as usual, sleepy and cross about something.

"You will take this letter, my boy . . . do you understand?"

Petrushka did not speak.

"You will take it to the department; there you must find the secretary on duty, Vahramyev. He is the one on duty today. Do you understand that?"

"I understand."

"I understand! He can't even say, 'I understand, sir!' You must ask the secretary, Vahramyev, and tell him that your master desired you to send his regards, and humbly requests him to refer to the address book of our office and find out where the titular councillor, Golyadkin, is living?"

Petrushka remained mute, and, as Mr. Golyadkin fancied, smiled.

"Well, so you see, Pyotr, you have to ask him for the address, and find out where the new clerk, Golyadkin, lives."

"Yes."

"You must ask for the address and then take this letter there. Do you understand?"

"I understand."

"If there . . . where you have to take the letter, that gentleman to whom you have to give the letter, that Golyadkin . . . What are you laughing at, you blockhead?"

"What is there to laugh at? What is it to me! I wasn't doing anything, sir. it's not for the likes of us to laugh . . ."

"Oh, well . . . if that gentleman should ask, 'How is your master, how is he'; if he . . . well, if he should ask you anything — you hold your tongue, and answer, 'My master is all right and begs you for an answer to his letter.' Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, then, say, 'My master is all right and quite well,' say 'and is just getting ready to pay a call: and he asks you,' say, 'for an answer in writing.' Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"Well, go along, then."

"Why, what a bother I have with this blockhead too! He's laughing, and there's nothing to be done. What's he laughing at? I've lived to see trouble. Here I've lived like this to see trouble. Though perhaps it may all turn out for the best . . . That rascal will be loitering about for the next two hours now, I expect; he'll go off somewhere else. . . . There's no sending him anywhere. What a misery it is! . . . What misery has come upon me!"

Feeling his troubles to the full, our hero made up his mind to remain passive for two hours till Petrushka returned. For an hour of the time he walked about the room, smoked, then put aside his pipe and sat down to a book, then he lay down on the sofa, then took up his pipe again, then again began running about the room. He tried to think things over but was absolutely unable to think about anything. At last the agony of remaining passive reached the climax and Mr. Golyadkin made up his

mind to take a step. "Petrushka will come in another hour," he thought. "I can give the key to the porter, and I myself can, so to speak . . . I can investigate the matter: I shall investigate the matter in my own way."

Without loss of time, in haste to investigate the matter, Mr. Golyadkin took his hat, went out of the room, locked up his flat, went in to the porter, gave him the key, together with ten kopecks — Mr. Golyadkin had become extraordinarily free-handed of late — and rushed off. Mr. Golyadkin went first on foot to the Ismailovsky Bridge. It took him half an hour to get there. When he reached to goal of his journey he went straight into the yard of the house so familiar to him, and glanced up at the windows of the civil councillor Berendyev's flat. Except for three windows hung with red curtains all the rest was dark.

"Olsufy Ivanovitch has no visitors today," thought Mr. Golyadkin; "they must all be staying at home today."

After standing for some time in the yard, our hero tried to decide on some course of action. but he was apparently not destined to reach a decision. Mr. Golyadkin changed his mind, and with a wave of his hand went back into the street.

"No, there's no need for me to go today. What could I do here? . . . No, I'd better, so to speak . . . I'll investigate the matter personally."

Coming to this conclusion, Mr. Golyadkin rushed off to his office. He had a long way to go. It was horribly muddy, besides, and the wet snow lay about in thick drifts. But it seemed as though difficulty did not exist for our hero at the moment. He was drenched through, it is true, and he was a good deal spattered with mud.

"But that's no matter, so long as the object is obtained."

And Mr. Golyadkin certainly was nearing his goal. The dark mass of the huge government building stood up black before his eyes.

"Stay," he thought; "where am I going, and what am I going to do here? Suppose I do find out where he lives? Meanwhile, Petrushka will certainly have come back and brought me the answer. I am only wasting my precious time, I am simply wasting my time. Though shouldn't I, perhaps, go in and see Vahramyev? But, no, I'll go later. . . . Ech! There was no need to have gone out at all. But, there, it's my temperament! I've a knack of always seizing a chance of rushing ahead of things, whether there is a need to or not. . . . H'm! . . . what time is it? It must be nine by now. Petrushka might come and not find me at home. It was pure folly on my part to go out . . . Ech, it is really a nuisance!"

Sincerely acknowledging that he had been guilty of an act of folly, our hero ran back to Shestilavotchny Street. He arrived there, weary and exhausted. From the porter he learned that Petrushka has not dreamed of turning up yet.

"To be sure! I foresaw it would be so," thought our hero; and meanwhile it's nine o'clock. Ech, he's such a good-for-nothing chap! He's always drinking somewhere! Mercy on us! What a day had fallen to my miserable lot!"

Reflecting in this way, Mr. Golyadkin unlocked his flat, got a light, took off his outdoor things, lighted his pipe and, tired, worn-out, exhausted and hungry, lay down on the sofa and waited for Petrushka.

The candle burnt dimly; the light flickered on the wall. . . . Mr. Golyadkin gazed and gazed, and thought and thought, and fell asleep at last, worn out.

It was late when he woke up. The candle had almost burnt down, was smoking and on the point of going out. Mr. Golyadkin jumped up, shook himself, and remembered it all, absolutely all. Behind the screen he heard Petrushka snoring lustily. Mr. Golyadkin rushed to the window — not a light anywhere. He opened the movable pane — all was still; the city was asleep as though it were dead: so it must have been two or three o'clock; so it proved to be, indeed; the clock behind the partition made an effort and struck two. Mr. Golyadkin rushed behind the partition.

He succeeded, somehow, though only after great exertions, in rousing Petrushka, and making him sit up in his bed. At that moment the candle went out completely. About ten minutes passed before Mr. Golyadkin succeeded in finding another candle and lighting it. In the interval Petrushka had fallen asleep again.

"You scoundrel, you worthless fellow!" said Mr. Golyadkin, shaking him up again. "Will you get up, will you wake?" After half an hour of effort Mr. Golyadkin succeeded, however, in rousing his servant thoroughly, and dragging him out from behind the partition. Only then, our hero remarked the fact that Petrushka was what is called dead-drunk and could hardly stand on his legs.

"You good-for-nothing fellow!" cried Mr. Golyadkin; "you ruffian! You'll be the death of me! Good heavens! whatever has he done with the letter? Ach, my God! where is it? . . . And why did I write it? As though there were any need for me to have written it! I went scribbling away out of pride, like a noodle! I've got myself into this fix out of pride! That is what dignity does for you, you rascal, that is dignity! . . . Come, what have you done with the letter, you ruffian? To whom did you give it?"

"I didn't give any one any letter; and I never had any letter . . . so there!"

Mr. Golyadkin wrung his hands in despair.

"Listen, Pyotr . . . listen to me, listen to me . . ."

"I am listening . . ."

"Where have you been? — answer . . ."

"Where have I been . . . I've been to see good people! What is it to me!"

"Oh, Lord, have mercy on us! Where did you go, to begin with? Did you go to the department? . . . Listen, Pyotr, perhaps you're drunk?"

"Me drunk! If I should be struck on the spot this minute, not a drop, not a drop — so there . . ."

"No, no, it's no matter you're being drunk. . . . I only asked; it's all right your being drunk; I don't mind, Petrushka, I don't mind. . . . Perhaps it's only that you have forgotten, but you'll remember it all. Come, try to remember — have you been to that clerk's, to Vahramyev's; have you been to him or not?"

"I have not been, and there's no such clerk. Not if I were this minute . . ."



"No, no, Pyotr! No, Petrushka, you know I don't mind. Why, you see I don't mind. . . . Come, what happened? To be sure, it's cold and damp in the street, and so a man has a drop, and it's no matter. I am not angry. I've been drinking myself today, my boy. . . . Come, think and try and remember, did you go to Vahramyev?"

"Well, then, now, this is how it was, it's the truth — I did go, if this very minute . . ."

"Come, that is right, Petrushka, that is quite right that you've been. you see I'm not angry. . . . Come, come," our hero went on, coaxing his servant more and more, patting him on the shoulder and smiling to him, "come, you had a little nip, you scoundrel. . . . You had two-penn'orth of something I suppose? You're a sly rogue! Well, that's no matter; come, you see that I'm not angry . . . . I'm not angry, my boy, I'm not angry . . . ."

"No, I'm not a sly rogue, say what you like. . . . I only went to see some good friends. I'm not a rogue, and I never have been a rogue . . . ."

"Oh, no, no, Petrushka; listen, Petrushka, you know I'm not scolding when I called you a rogue. I said that in fun, I said it in a good sense. You see, Petrushka, it is sometimes a compliment to a man when you call him a rogue, a cunning fellow, that he's a sharp chap and would not let any one take him in. Some men like it . . . . Come, come, it doesn't matter! Come, tell me, Petrushka, without keeping anything back, openly, as to a friend . . . did you go to Vahramyev's, and did he give you the address?"

"He did give me the address, he did give me the address too. He's a nice gentleman! 'Your master,' says he, 'is a nice man,' says he, 'very nice man;' says he, 'I send my regards,' says he, 'to your master, thank him and say that I like him,' says he — 'how I do respect your master,' says he. 'Because,' says he, 'your master, Petrushka,' says he, 'is a good man, and you,' says he, 'Petrushka, are a good man too . . . .'"

"Ah, mercy on us! But the address, the address! You Judas!" The last word Mr. Golyadkin uttered almost in a whisper.

"And the address . . . he did give the address too."

"He did? Well, where does Golyadkin, the clerk Golyadkin, the titular councillor, live?"

"'Why,' says he, 'Golyadkin will be now at Shestilavotchny Street. When you get into Shestilavotchny Street take the stairs on the right and it's on the fourth floor. And there,' says he, 'you'll find Golyadkin . . . .'"

"You scoundrel!" our hero cried, out of patience at last. "You're a ruffian! Why, that's my address; why, you are talking about me. But there's another Golyadkin; I'm talking about the other one, you scoundrel!"

"Well, that's as you please! What is it to me? Have it your own way . . ."

"And the letter, the letter?" . . .

"What letter? There wasn't any letter, and I didn't see any letter."

"But what have you done with it, you rascal?"

"I delivered the letter, I delivered it. He sent his regards. 'Thank you,' says he, 'your master's a nice man,' says he. 'Give my regards,' says he, 'to your master . . .'"

"But who said that? Was it Golyadkin said it?"

Petrushka said nothing for a moment, and then, with a broad grin, he stared straight into his master's face . . . .

"Listen, you scoundrel!" began Mr. Golyadkin, breathless, beside himself with fury; "listen, you rascal, what have you done to me? Tell me what you've done to me! You've destroyed me, you villain, you've cut the head off my shoulders, you Judas!"

"Well, have it your own way! I don't care," said Petrushka in a resolute voice, retreating behind the screen.

"Come here, come here, you ruffian . . . ."

"I'm not coming to you now, I'm not coming at all. What do I care, I'm going to good folks. . . . Good folks live honestly, good folks live without falsity, and they never have doubles . . . ."

Mr. Golyadkin's hands and feet went icy cold, his breath failed him . . . .

"Yes," Petrushka went on, "they never have doubles. God doesn't afflict honest folk . . . ."

"You worthless fellow, you are drunk! Go to sleep now, you ruffian! And tomorrow you'll catch it," Mr. Golyadkin added in a voice hardly audible. As for Petrushka, he muttered something more; then he could be heard getting into bed, making the bed creak. After a prolonged yawn, he stretched; and at last began snoring, and slept the sleep of the just, as they say. Mr. Golyadkin was more dead than alive. Petrushka's behaviour, his very strange hints, which were yet so remote that it was useless to be angry at them, especially as they were uttered by a drunken man, and, in short, the sinister turn taken by the affair altogether, all this shook Mr. Golyadkin to the depths of his being.

"And what possessed me to go for him in the middle of the night?" said our hero, trembling all over from a sickly sensation. "What the devil made me have anything to do with a drunken man! What could I expect from a drunken man? Whatever he says is a lie. But what was he hinting at, the ruffian? Lord, have mercy on us! And why did I write that letter? I'm my own enemy, I'm my own murderer! As if I couldn't hold my tongue? I had to go scribbling nonsense! And what now! You are going to ruin, you are like an old rag, and yet you worry about your pride; you say, 'my honour is wounded,' you must stick up for your honour! My own murderer, that is what I am!"

Thus spoke Mr. Golyadkin and hardly dared to stir for terror. At last his eyes fastened upon an object which excited his interest to the utmost. In terror lest the object that caught his attention should prove to be an illusion, a deception of his fancy, he stretched out his hand to it with hope, with dread, with indescribable curiosity. . . . No, it was not a deception Not a delusion! It was a letter, really a letter, undoubtedly a letter, and addressed to him. Mr. Golyadkin took the letter from the table. His heart beat terribly.

"No doubt that scoundrel brought it," he thought, "put it there, and then forgot it; no doubt that is how it happened: no doubt that is just how it happened . . . ."

The letter was from Vahramyev, a young fellow-clerk who had once been his friend. "I had a presentiment of this," thought our hero, "and I had a presentiment of all that there will be in the letter . . . ."

The letter was as follows —

"Dear Sir Yakov Petrovitch!

"Your servant is drunk, and there is no getting any sense out of him. For that reason I prefer to reply by letter. I hasten to inform you that the commission you've entrusted to me — that is, to deliver a letter to a certain person you know, I agree to carry out carefully and exactly. That person, who is very well known to you and who has taken the place of a friend to me, whose name I will refrain from mentioning (because I do not wish unnecessarily to blacken the reputation of a perfectly innocent man), lodges with us at Karolina Ivanovna's, in the room in which, when you were among us, the infantry officer from Tambov used to be. That person, however, is always to be found in the company of honest and true-hearted persons, which is more than one can say for some people. I intend from this day to break off all connection with you; it's impossible for us to remain on friendly terms and to keep up the appearance of comradeship congruous with them. And, therefore, I beg you, dear sir, immediately on the receipt of this candid letter from me, to send me the two roubles you owe me for the razor of foreign make which I sold you seven months ago, if you will kindly remember, when you were still living with us in the lodgings of Karolina Ivanovna, a lady whom I respect from the bottom of my heart. I am acting in this way because you, from the accounts I hear from sensible persons, have lost your dignity and reputation and have become a source of danger to the morals of the innocent and uncontaminated. For some persons are not straightforward, their words are full of falsity and their show of good intentions is suspicious. People can always be found capable of insulting Karolina Ivanovna, who is always irreproachable in her conduct, and an honest woman, and, what's more, a maiden lady, though no longer young — though, on the other hand, of a good foreign family — and this fact I've been asked to mention in this letter by several persons, and I speak also for myself. In any case you will learn all in due time, if you haven't learnt it yet, though you've made yourself notorious from one end of the town to the other, according to the accounts I hear from sensible people, and consequently might well have received intelligence relating to you, my dear sir, that a certain person you know, whose name I will not mention here, for certain honourable reasons, is highly respected by right-thinking people, and is, moreover, of lively and agreeable disposition, and is equally successful in the service and in the society of persons of common sense, is true in word and in friendship, and does not insult behind their back those with whom he is on friendly terms to their face.

"In any case, I remain

"Your obedient servant,

"N. Vahramyev."

"P.S. You had better dismiss your man: he is a drunkard and probably gives you a great deal of trouble; you had better engage Yevstafy, who used to be in service here, and is not out of a place. Your present servant is not only a drunkard, but, what's more, he's a thief, for only last week he sold a pound of sugar to Karolina Ivanovna at less than cost price, which, in my opinion, he could not have done otherwise than by robing you in a very sly way, little by little, at different times. I write this to you for your own good, although some people can do nothing but insult and deceive everybody, especially persons of honesty and good nature; what is more, they slander them behind their back and misrepresent them, simply from envy, and because they can't call themselves the same.

"V."

After reading Vahramyev's letter our hero remained for a long time sitting motionless on his sofa. A new light seemed breaking through the obscure and baffling fog which had surrounded him for the last two days. Our hero seemed to reach a partial understanding . . . He tried to get up from the sofa to take a turn about the room, to rouse himself, to collect his scattered ideas, to fix them upon a certain subject and then to set himself to rights a little, to think over his position thoroughly. But as soon as he tried to stand up he fell back again at once, weak and helpless. "Yes, of course, I had a presentiment of all that; how he writes though, and what is the real meaning of his words. Supposing I do understand the meaning; but what is it leading to? He should have said straight out: this and that is wanted, and I would have done it. Things have taken such a turn, things have come to such an unpleasant pass! Oh, if only tomorrow would make haste and come, and I could make haste and get to work! I know now what to do. I shall say this and that, I shall agree with his arguments, I won't sell my honour, but . . . maybe; but he, that person we know of, that disagreeable person, how does he come to be mixed up in it? And why has he turned up here? Oh, if tomorrow would make haste and come! They'll slander me before then, they are intriguing, they are working to spite me! The great thing is not to lose time, and now, for instance, to write a letter, and to say this and that and that I agree to this and that. And as soon as it is daylight tomorrow send it off, before he can do anything . . . and so checkmate them, get in before them, the darlings. . . . They will ruin me by their slanders, and that's the fact of the matter!"

Mr. Golyadkin drew the paper to him, took up a pen and wrote the following missive in answer to the secretary's letter —

"Dear Sir Nestor Ignatyevitch!

"With amazement mingled with heartfelt distress I have perused your insulting letter to me, for I see clearly that you are referring to me when you speak of certain discreditable persons and false friends. I see with genuine sorrow how rapidly the calumny has spread and how deeply it has taken root, to the detriment of my prosperity, my honour and my good name. And this is the more distressing and mortifying that even honest people of a genuinely noble way of thinking and, what is even more important, of straightforward and open dispositions, abandon the interests of honourable men and with all the qualities of their hearts attach themselves to the pernicious corruption, which in our difficult and immoral age has unhappily increased and multiplied so greatly and so disloyally. In conclusion, I will say that the debt of two roubles of which you remind me I regard as a sacred duty to return to you in its entirety.

"As for your hints concerning a certain person of the female sex, concerning the intentions, calculations and various designs of that person, I can only tell you, sir, that I have but a very dim and obscure understanding of those insinuations. Permit me, sir, to preserve my honourable way of thinking and my good name undefiled, in any case. I am ready to stoop to a written explanation as more secure, and I am, moreover, ready to enter into conciliatory proposals on mutual terms, of course. To that end I beg you, my dear sir, to convey to that person my readiness for a personal arrangement and, what is more, to beg her to fix the time and place of the interview. It grieved me, sir, to read your hints of my having insulted you, having been treacherous to our original friendship and having spoken ill of you. I ascribe this misunderstanding to the abominable calumny, envy and ill-will of those whom I may justly stigmatize as my bitterest foes. But I suppose they do not know that innocence is strong through its very innocence, that the shamelessness, the insolence and the revolting familiarity of some persons, sooner or later gains the stigma of universal contempt; and that such persons come to ruin through nothing but their own worthlessness and the corruption of their own hearts. In conclusion, I beg you, sir, to convey to those persons that their strange pretensions and their dishonourable and fantastic desire to squeeze others out of the position which those others occupy, by their very existence in this world, and to take their place,

are deserving of contempt, amazement, compassion and, what is more, the madhouse; moreover, such efforts are severely prohibited by law, which in my opinion is perfectly just, for every one ought to be satisfied with his own position. Every one has his fixed position, and if this is a joke it is a joke in very bad taste. I will say more: it is utterly immoral, for, I make bold to assure you, sir, my own views which I have expounded above, in regard to keeping one's own place, are purely moral.

"In any case I have the honour to remain,

"Your humble servant,

"Y. Golyadkin."

## Chapter 10

Altogether, we may say, the adventures of the previous day had thoroughly unnerved Mr. Golyadkin. Our hero passed a very bad night; that is, he did not get thoroughly off to sleep for five minutes: as though some practical joker had scattered bristles in his bed. He spent the whole night in a sort of half-sleeping state, tossing from side to side, from right to left, moaning and groaning, dozing off for a moment, waking up again a minute later, and all was accompanied by a strange misery, vague memories, hideous visions — in fact, everything disagreeable that can be imagined . . . .

At one moment the figure of Andrey Filippovitch appeared before him in a strange, mysterious half-light. It was a frigid, wrathful figure, with a cold, harsh eye and with stiffly polite word of blame on its lips . . . and as soon as Mr. Golyadkin began going up to Andrey Filippovitch to defend himself in some way and to prove to him that he was not at all such as his enemies represented him, that he was like this and like that, that he even possessed innate virtues of his own, superior to the average — at once a person only too well known for his discreditable behaviour appeared on the scene, and by some most revolting means instantly frustrated poor Mr. Golyadkin's efforts, on the spot, almost before the latter's eyes, blackened his reputation, trampled his dignity in the mud, and then immediately took possession of his place in the service and in society.

At another time Mr. Golyadkin's head felt sore from some sort of slight blow of late conferred and humbly accepted, received either in the course of daily life or somehow in the performance of his duty, against which blow it was difficult to protest . . . And while Mr. Golyadkin was racking his brains over the question of why it was difficult to protest even against such a blow, this idea of a blow gradually melted away into a different form — into the form of some familiar, trifling, or rather important piece of nastiness which he had seen, heard, or even himself committed — and frequently committed, indeed, and not on nasty ground, not from any nasty impulse, even, but just because it happened — sometimes, for instance, out of delicacy, another time owing to his absolute defencelessness — in fact, because . . . because, in fact, Mr. Golyadkin knew perfectly well because of what! At this point Mr. Golyadkin blushed in his sleep, and, smothering his blushes, muttered to himself that in this case he ought to be able to show the strength of his character, he ought to be able to show in this case the remarkable strength of his character, and then wound up by asking himself, "What, after all, is strength of character? Why understand it now?" . . .

But what irritated and enraged Mr. Golyadkin most of all was that invariably, at such a moment, a person well known for his undignified burlesque turned up uninvited, and, regardless of the fact that the matter was apparently settled, he, too, would begin muttering, with an unseemly little smile "What's the use of strength of character! How could you and I, Yakov Petrovitch, have strength of character? . . ."

Then Mr. Golyadkin would dream that he was in the company of a number of persons distinguished for their wit and good breeding; that he, Mr. Golyadkin, too, was conspicuous for his wit and politeness, that everybody like him, which was very agreeable to Mr. Golyadkin, too, was conspicuous for his wit and politeness, that everybody liked him, even some of his enemies who were present began to like him, which was very agreeable to Mr. Golyadkin; that every one gave him precedence, and that at last Mr. Golyadkin himself, with gratification, overheard the host, drawing one of the guests aside, speak in his, Mr. Golyadkin's praise . . . and all of a sudden, apropos of nothing, there appeared again a person, notorious for his treachery and brutal impulses, in the form of Mr. Golyadkin junior, and on the spot, at once, by his very appearance on the scene, Mr. Golyadkin junior destroyed the whole triumph and glory of Mr. Golyadkin senior, eclipsed Mr. Golyadkin senior, trampled him in the mud, and, at last, proved clearly that Golyadkin senior — that is, the genuine one — was not the genuine one at all but the sham, and that he, Golyadkin junior, was the real one; that, in fact, Mr. Golyadkin senior was not at all what he appeared to be, but something very disgraceful, and that consequently he had no right to mix in the society of honourable and well-bred people. And all this was done so quickly that Mr. Golyadkin had not time to open his mouth before all of them were subjugated, body and soul, by the wicked, sham Mr. Golyadkin, and with profound contempt rejected him, the real and innocent Mr. Golyadkin. There was not one person left whose opinion the infamous Mr. Golyadkin would not have changed round. There was not left one person, even the most insignificant of the company, to whom the false and worthless Mr. Golyadkin would not make up in his blandest manner, upon whom he would not fawn in his own way, before whom he would not burn sweet and agreeable incense, so that the flattered person simply sniffed and sneezed till the tears came, in token of the intensest pleasure. And the worst of it was that all this was done in a flash: the swiftness of movement of the false and worthless Mr. Golyadkin was marvellous! he sincerely had time, for instance, to make up to one person and win his good graces — and before one could wink an eye he was at another. He stealthily fawns on another, drops a smile of benevolence, twirls on his short, round, though rather wooden-looking leg, and already he's at a third, and is cringing upon a third, he's making up to him in a friendly way; before one has time to open one's mouth, before one has time to feel surprised he's at a fourth, at the same manoeuvres with him — it was horrible: sorcery and nothing else! And every one was pleased with him and everybody liked him, and every one was exalting him, and all were proclaiming in chorus that his politeness and sarcastic wit were infinitely superior to the politeness and sarcastic wit of the real Mr. Golyadkin and putting the real and innocent Mr. Golyadkin to shame thereby and rejecting the veritable Mr. Golyadkin, and shoving and pushing out the loyal Mr. Golyadkin, and showering blows on the man so well known for his love towards his fellow creatures! . . .

In misery, in terror and in fury, the cruelly treated Mr. Golyadkin ran out into the street and began trying to take a cab in order to drive straight to his Excellency's, or, at any rate, to Andrey Filippovitch, but — horror! the cabman absolutely refused to take Mr. Golyadkin, saying, "We cannot drive two gentlemen exactly alike, sir; a good man tries to like honestly, your honour, and never has a double." Overcome with shame, the unimpeachable, honest Mr. Golyadkin looked round and did, in fact, assure himself with his own eyes that the cabman and Petrushka, who had joined them, were all quite right, for the depraved Mr. Golyadkin was actually on the spot, beside him, close at hand, and with his characteristic nastiness was again, at this critical moment, certainly preparing to do something very unseemly, and quite out of keeping with that gentlemanliness of character which is usually acquired by good breeding — that gentlemanliness of which the loathsome Mr. Golyadkin the second was always boasting on every opportunity. Beside himself with shame and despair, the utterly ruined though perfectly just Mr. Golyadkin dashed headlong away, wherever fate might lead him; but with every step he took, with every thud of his foot on the granite of the pavement, there leapt up as though out of the earth a Mr. Golyadkin precisely the same, perfectly alike, and of a revolting depravity of heart. And all these precisely similar Golyadkins set to running after one another as soon as they appeared, and stretched in a long chain like a file of geese, hobbling after the real Mr. Golyadkin, so there was nowhere to escape from these duplicates — so that Mr. Golyadkin, who was in every way deserving of

compassion, was breathless with terror; so that at last a terrible multitude of duplicates had sprung into being; so that the whole town was obstructed at last by duplicate Golyadkins, and the police officer, seeing such a breach of decorum, was obliged to seize all these duplicates by the collar and to put them into the watch-house, which happened to be beside him . . . Numb and chill with horror, our hero woke up, and numb and chill with horror felt that his waking state was hardly more cheerful . . . It was oppressive and harrowing . . . He was overcome by such anguish that it seemed as though some one were gnawing at his heart.

At last Mr. Golyadkin could endure it no longer. "This shall not be!" he cried, resolutely sitting up in bed, and after this exclamation he felt fully awake.

It seemed as though it were rather late in the day. It was unusually light in the room. The sunshine filtered through the frozen panes and flooded the room with light, which surprised Mr. Golyadkin not a little and, so far as Mr. Golyadkin could remember, at least, there had scarcely ever been such exceptions in the course of the heavenly luminary before. Our hero had hardly time to wonder at this when he heard the clock buzzing behind the partition as though it was just on the point of striking. "Now," thought Mr. Golyadkin, and he prepared to listen with painful suspense . . .

But to complete Mr. Golyadkin's astonishment, clock whirred and only struck once.

"What does this mean?" cried our hero, finally leaping out of bed. And, unable to believe his ears, he rushed behind the screen just as he was. It actually was one o'clock. Mr. Golyadkin glanced at Petrushka's bed; but the room did not even smell of Petrushka: his bed had long been made and left, his boots were nowhere to be seen either — an unmistakable sign that Petrushka was not in the house. Mr. Golyadkin rushed to the door: the door was locked. "But where is he, where is Petrushka?" he went on in a whisper, conscious of intense excitement and feeling a perceptible tremor run all over him . . . Suddenly a thought floated into his mind . . . Mr. Golyadkin rushed to the table, looked all over it, felt all round — yes, it was true, his letter of the night before to Vahramyev was not there. Petrushka was nowhere behind the screen either, the clock had just struck one, and some new points were evident to him in Vahramyev's letter, points that were obscure at first sight though now they were fully explained. Petrushka had evidently been bribed at last! "Yes, yes, that was so!"

"So this was how the chief plot was hatched!" cried Mr. Golyadkin, slapping himself on the forehead, opening his eyes wider and wider; "so in that filthy German woman's den the whole power of evil lies hidden now! So she was only making a strategic diversion in directing me to the Ismailovsky Bridge — she was putting me off the scent, confusing me (the worthless witch), and in that way laying her mines! Yes, that is so! If one only looks at the thing from that point of view, all of this is bound to be so, and the scoundrel's appearance on the scene is fully explained: it's all part and parcel of the same thing. They've kept him in reserve a long while, they had him in readiness for the evil day. This is how it has all turned out! This is what it has come to. But there, never mind. No time has been lost so far."

At this point Mr. Golyadkin recollected with horror that it was past one in the afternoon. "What if they have succeeded by now? . . ." He uttered a moan. . . . "But, no, they are lying, they've not had time — we shall see . . ."

He dressed after a fashion, seized paper and a pen, and scribbled the following missive —

"Dear Sir Yakov Petrovitch!

"Either you or I, but both together is out of the question! And so I must inform you that your strange, absurd, and at the same time impossible desire to appear to be my twin and to give yourself out as such serves no other purpose than to bring about your complete disgrace and discomfiture. And so I beg you, for the sake of your own advantage, to step aside and make way for really honourable men of loyal aims. In the opposite case I am ready to determine upon extreme measures. I lay down my pen and await . . . However, I remain ready to oblige or to meet you with pistols.

"Y. Golyadkin."

Our hero rubbed his hands energetically when he had finished the letter. Then, pulling on his greatcoat and putting on his hat, he unlocked his flat with a spare key and set off for the department. He reached the office but could not make up his mind to go in — it was by now too late. It was half-past two by Mr. Golyadkin's watch. All at once a circumstance of apparently little importance settled some doubts in Mr. Golyadkin's mind: a flushed and breathless figure suddenly made its appearance from behind the screen of the department building and with a stealthy movement like a rat he darted up the steps and into the entry. It was a copying clerk called Ostafyev, a man Mr. Golyadkin knew very well, who was rather useful and ready to do anything for a trifle. Knowing Ostafyev's weak spot and surmising that after his brief, unavoidable absence he would probably be greedier than ever for tips, our hero made up his mind not to be sparing of them, and immediately darted up the steps, and then into the entry after him, called to him and, with a mysterious air, drew him aside into a convenient corner, behind a huge iron stove. And having led him there, our hero began questioning him.

"Well, my dear fellow, how are things going in there . . . you understand me? . . ."

"Yes, your honour, I wish you good health, your honour."

"All right, my good man, all right; but I'll reward you, my good fellow. Well, you see, how are things?"

"What is your honour asking?" At this point Ostafyev held his hand as though by accident before his open mouth.

"You see, my dear fellow, this is how it is . . . but don't you imagine . . . Come, is Andrey Filippovitch here? . . ."

"Yes, he is here."

"And are the clerks here?"

"Yes, sir, they are here as usual."

"And his Excellency too?"

"And his Excellency too." Here the man held his hand before his mouth again, and looked rather curiously and strangely at Mr. Golyadkin, so at least our hero fancied.

"And there's nothing special there, my good man?"

"No, sir, certainly not, sir."



"So there's nothing concerning me, my friend. Is there nothing going on there — that is, nothing more than . . . eh? nothing more, you understand, my friend?"

"No, sir, I've heard nothing so far, sir." Again the man put his hand before his mouth and again looked rather strangely at Mr. Golyadkin. The fact was, Mr. Golyadkin was trying to read Ostafyev's countenance, trying to discover whether there was not something hidden in it. And, in fact, he did look as though he were hiding something: Ostafyev seemed to grow colder and more churlish, and did not enter into Mr. Golyadkin's interests with the same sympathy as at the beginning of the conversation. "He is to some extent justified," thought Mr. Golyadkin. "After all, what am I to him? Perhaps he has already been bribed by the other side, and that's why he has just been absent. but, here, I'll try him . . ." Mr. Golyadkin realized that the moment for kopecks had arrived.

"Here, my dear fellow . . ."

"I'm feelingly grateful for your honour's kindness."

"I'll give you more than that."

"Yes, your honour."

"I'll give you some more directly, and when the business is over I'll give you as much again. Do you understand?"

The clerk did not speak. He stood at attention and stared fixedly at Mr. Golyadkin.

"Come, tell me now: have you heard nothing about me? . . ."

"I think, so far, I have not . . . so to say . . . nothing so far." Ostafyev, like Mr. Golyadkin, spoke deliberately and preserved a mysterious air, moving his eyebrows a little, looking at the ground, trying to fall into the suitable tone, and, in fact, doing his very utmost to earn what had been promised him, for what he had received already he reckoned as already earned.

"And you know nothing?"

"So far, nothing, sir."

"Listen . . . you know . . . maybe you will know . . ."

"Later on, of course, maybe I shall know."

"It's a poor look out," thought our hero. "Listen: here's something more, my dear fellow."

"I am truly grateful to your honour."

"Was Vahramyev here yesterday? . . ."

"Yes, sir."

"And . . . somebody else? . . . Was he? . . . Try and remember, brother."

The man ransacked his memory for a moment, and could think of nothing appropriate.

"No, sir, there wasn't anybody else."

"H'm!" a silence followed.

"Listen, brother, here's some more; tell me all, every detail."

"Yes, sir," Ostafyev had by now become as soft as silk; which was just what Mr. Golyadkin needed.

"Explain to me now, my good man, what footing is he on?"

"All right, sir, a good one, sir," answered the man, gazing open-eyed at Mr. Golyadkin.

"How do you mean, all right?"

"Well, it's just like that, sir." Here Ostafyev twitched his eyebrows significantly. But he was utterly nonplussed and didn't know what more to say.

"It's a poor look out," thought Mr. Golyadkin.

"And hasn't anything more happened . . . in there . . . about Vahramyev?"

"But everything is just as usual."

"Think a little."

"There is, they say . . ."

"Come, what?"

Ostafyev put his hand in front of his mouth.

"Wasn't there a letter . . . from here . . . to me?"

"Mihyeev the attendant went to Vahramyev's lodging, to their German landlady, so I'll go and ask him if you like."

"Do me the favour, brother, for goodness' sake! . . . I only mean . . . you mustn't imagine anything, brother, I only mean . . . Yes, you question him, brother, find out whether they are not getting up something concerning me. Find out how he is acting. That is what I want; that is what you must find out, my dear fellow, and then I'll reward you, my good man . . ."

"I will, your honour, and Ivan Semyonovitch sat in your place today, sir."

"Ivan Semyonovitch? Oh! really, you don't say so."

"Andrey Filippovitch told him to sit there."

"Re-al-ly! How did that happen? You must find out, brother; for God's sake find out, brother; find it all out — and I'll reward you, my dear fellow; that's what I want to know . . . and don't you imagine anything, brother . . ."

"Just so, sir, just so; I'll go at once. And aren't you going in today, sir?"

"No, my friend; I only looked round, I only looked round, you know. I only came to have a look round, my friend, and I'll reward you afterwards, my friend."

"Yes, sir." The man ran rapidly and eagerly up the stairs and Mr. Golyadkin was left alone.

"It's a poor look out!" he thought. "Eh, it's a bad business, a bad business! Ech! things are in a bad way with us now! What does it all mean? What did that drunkard's insinuations mean, for instance, and whose trickery was it? Ah! I know whose it was. And what a thing this is. No doubt they found out and made him sit there. . . . But, after all, did they sit him there? It was Andrey Filippovitch sat him there and with what object? Probably they found out. . . . That is Vahramyev's work — that is, not Vahramyev, he is as stupid as an ashen post, Vahramyev is, and they are all at work on his behalf, and they egged that scoundrel on to come here for the same purpose, and the German woman brought up her grievance, the one-eyed hussy. I always suspected that this intrigue was not without an object and that in all this old-womanish gossip there must be something, and I said as much to Krestyan Ivanovitch, telling him they'd sworn to cut a man's throat — in a moral sense, of course — and they pounced upon Karolina Ivanovna. Yes, there are master hands at work in this, one can see! Yes, sir, there are master hands at work in this, not Vahramyev's. I've said already that Vahramyev is stupid, but . . . I know who it is behind it all, it's that rascal, that impostor! It's only that he relies upon, which is partly proved by his successes in the best society. And it would certainly be desirable to know on what footing he stands now. What is he now among them? Only, why have they taken Ivan Semyonovitch? What the devil do they want with Ivan Semyonovitch? Could not they have found any one else? Though it would come to the same thing whoever it had been, and the only thing I know is that I have suspected Ivan Semyonovitch for a long time past. I noticed long ago what a nasty, horrid old man he was — they say he lends money and takes interest like any Jew. To be sure, the bear's the leading spirit in the whole affair. One can detect the bear in the whole affair. It began in this way. It began at the Ismailovsky Bridge; that's how it began . . ."

At this point Mr. Golyadkin frowned, as though he had taken a bite out of a lemon, probably remembering something very unpleasant.

"But, there, it doesn't matter," he thought. "I keep harping on my own troubles. What will Ostafyev find out? Most likely he is staying on or has been delayed somehow. It is a good thing, in a sense, that I am intriguing like this, and am laying mines on my side too. I've only to give Ostafyev ten kopecks and he's . . . so to speak, on my side. Only the point is, is he really on my side? Perhaps they've got him on their side too . . . and they are carrying on an intrigue by means of him on their side too. He looks a ruffian, the rascal, a regular ruffian; he's hiding something, the rogue. 'No, nothing,' says he, 'and I am deeply grateful to your honour.' says he. You ruffian, you!"

He heard a noise . . . Mr. Golyadkin shrank up and skipped behind the stove. Some one came down stairs and went out into the street. "Who could that be going away now?" our hero thought to himself. A minute later footsteps were audible again . . . At this point Mr. Golyadkin could not resist poking the very tip of his nose out beyond his corner — he poked it out and instantly withdrew it again, as though some one had pricked it with a pin. This time some one he knew well was coming — that is the scoundrel, the intriguer and the reprobate — he was approaching with his usual mean, tripping little step, prancing and shuffling with his feet as though he were going to kick some one.

"The rascal," said our hero to himself.

Mr. Golyadkin could not, however, help observing that the rascal had under his arm a huge green portfolio belonging to his Excellency.

"He's on a special commission again," thought Mr. Golyadkin, flushing crimson and shrinking into himself more than ever from vexation.

As soon as Mr. Golyadkin junior had slipped past Mr. Golyadkin senior without observing him in the least, footsteps were heard for the third time, and this time Mr. Golyadkin guessed that these were Ostafyev's. It was, in fact, the sleek figure of a copying clerk, Pisarenko by name. This surprised Mr. Golyadkin. Why had he mixed up other people in their secret? our hero wondered. What barbarians! nothing is sacred to them! "Well, my friend?" he brought out, addressing Pisarenko: "who sent you, my friend? . . ."

"I've come about your business. There's no news so far from any one. But should there be any we'll let you know."

"And Ostafyev?"

"It was quite impossible for him to come, your honour. His Excellency has walked through the room twice, and I've no time to stay."

"Thank you, my good man, thank you . . . only, tell me . . ."

"Upon my word, sir, I can't stay. . . . They are asking for us every minute . . . but if your honour will stay here, we'll let you know if anything happens concerning your little affair."

"No, my friend, you just tell me . . ."

"Excuse me, I've no time to stay, sir," said Pisarenko, tearing himself away from Mr. Golyadkin, who had clutched him by the lapel of his coat. "I really can't. If your honour will stay here we'll let you know."

"In a minute, my good man, in a minute! In a minute, my good fellow! I tell you what, here's a letter; and I'll reward you, my good man."

"Yes, sir."

"Try and give it to Mr. Golyadkin my dear fellow."

"Golyadkin?"

"Yes, my man, to Mr. Golyadkin."

"Very good, sir; as soon as I get off I'll take it, and you stay here, meanwhile; no one will see you here . . ."

"No, my good man, don't imagine . . . I'm not standing here to avoid being seen. But I'm not going to stay here now, my friend . . . I'll be close here in the side of the street. There's a coffee-house near here; so I'll wait there, and if anything happens, you let me know about anything, you understand?"

"Very good, sir. Only let me go; I understand."

"And I'll reward you," Mr. Golyadkin called after Pisarenko, when he had at last released him . . . ."

"The rogue seemed to be getting rather rude," our hero reflected as he stealthily emerged from behind the stove. "There's some other dodge here. That's clear . . . At first it was one thing and another . . . he really was in a hurry, though; perhaps there's a great deal to do in the office. And his Excellency had been through the room twice . . . How did that happen? . . . Ough! never mind! it may mean nothing, perhaps; but now we shall see . . . ."

At this point Mr. Golyadkin was about to open the door, intending to go out into the street, when suddenly, at that very instant, his Excellency's carriage was opened from within and a gentleman jumped out. This gentleman was no other than Mr. Golyadkin junior, who had only gone out ten minutes before. Mr. Golyadkin senior remembered that the Director's flat was only a couple of paces away.

"He has been out on a special commission," our hero thought to himself.

Meanwhile, Mr. Golyadkin junior took out of the carriage a thick green portfolio and other papers. Finally, giving some orders to the coachman, he opened the door, almost ran up against Mr. Golyadkin senior, purposely avoided noticing him, acting in this way expressly to annoy him, and mounted the office staircase at a rapid canter.

"It's a bad look out," thought Mr. Golyadkin. "This is what it has come to now! Oh, good Lord! look at him."

For half a minute our hero remained motionless. At last he made up his mind. Without pausing to think, though he was aware of a violent palpitation of the heart and a tremor in all his limbs, he ran up the stair after his enemy.

"Here goes; what does it matter to me? I have nothing to do with the case," he thought, taking off his hat, his greatcoat and his goloshes in the entry.

When Mr. Golyadkin walked into his office, it was already getting dusk. Neither Andrey Filippovitch nor Anton Antonovitch were in the room. Both of them were in the Director's room, handing in reports. The Director, so it was rumoured, was in haste to report to a still higher Excellency. In consequence of this, and also because twilight was coming on, and the office hours were almost over, several of the clerks, especially the younger ones, were, at the moment when our hero entered, enjoying a period of inactivity; gathered together in groups, they were talking, arguing, and laughing, and some of the most youthful — that is, belonging to the lowest grades in the service, had got up a game of pitch-farthing in a corner, by a window. Knowing what was proper, and feeling at the moment a special need to conciliate and get on with them, Mr. Golyadkin immediately approached those with him he used to get on best, in order to wish them good day, and so on. But his colleagues answered his greetings rather strangely. He was unpleasantly impressed by a certain coldness, even curtness, one might almost say severity in their manner. No one shook hands with him. Some simply said, "Good day" and walked away; others barely nodded; one simply turned away and pretended not to notice him; at last some of them — and what mortified Mr. Golyadkin most of all, some of the youngsters of the lowest grades,

mere lads who, as Mr. Golyadkin justly observed about them, were capable of nothing but hanging about and playing pitch-farthing at every opportunity — little by little collected round Mr. Golyadkin, formed a group round him and almost barred his way. They all looked at him with a sort of insulting curiosity.

It was a bad sign. Mr. Golyadkin felt this, and very judiciously decided not to notice it. Suddenly a quite unexpected event completely finished him off, as they say, and utterly crushed him.

At the moment most trying to Mr. Golyadkin senior, suddenly, as though by design, there appeared in the group of fellow clerks surrounding him the figure of Mr. Golyadkin junior, gay as ever, smiling a little smile as ever, nimble, too, as ever; in short, mischievous, skipping and tripping, chuckling and fawning, with sprightly tongue and sprightly toe, as always, precisely as he had been the day before at a very unpleasant moment for Mr. Golyadkin senior, for instance.

Grinning, tripping and turning with a smile that seemed to say "good evening," to every one, he squeezed his way into the group of clerks, shaking hands with one, slapping another on the shoulder, putting his arm round another, explaining to a fourth how he had come to be employed by his Excellency, where he had been, what he had done, what he had brought with him; to the fifth, probably his most intimate friend, he gave a resounding kiss — in fact, everything happened as it had in Mr. Golyadkin's dream. When he had skipped about to his heart's content, polished them all off in his usual way, disposed them all in his favour, whether he needed them or not, when he had lavished his blandishments to the delectation of all the clerks, Mr. Golyadkin junior suddenly, and most likely by mistake, for he had not yet had time to notice his senior, held out his hand to Mr. Golyadkin senior also. Probably also by mistake — though he had had time to observe the dishonourable Mr. Golyadkin junior thoroughly, our hero at once eagerly seized the hand so unexpectedly held out to him and pressed it in the warmest and friendliest way, pressed it with a strange, quite unexpected, inner feeling, with a tearful emotion. Whether our hero was misled by the first movement of his worthless foe, or was taken unawares, or, without recognizing it, felt at the bottom of his heart how defenceless he was — it is difficult to say. The fact remains that Mr. Golyadkin senior, apparently knowing what he was doing, of his own free will, before witnesses, solemnly shook hands with him whom he called his mortal foe. But what was the amazement, the stupefaction and fury, what was the horror and the shame of Mr. Golyadkin senior, when his enemy and mortal foe, the dishonourable Mr. Golyadkin junior, noticing the mistake of that persecuted, innocent, perfidiously deceived man, without a trace of shame, of feeling, of compassion or of conscience, pulled his hand away with insufferable rudeness and insolence. What was worse, he shook the hand as though it had been polluted with something horrid; what is more, he spat aside with disgust, accompanying this with a most insulting gesture; worse still, he drew out his handkerchief and, in the most unseemly way, wiped all the fingers that had rested for one moment in the hand of Mr. Golyadkin senior. While he did this Mr. Golyadkin junior looked about him in his characteristic horrid way, took care that every one should see what he was doing, glanced into people's eyes and evidently tried to insinuate to every one everything that was most unpleasant in regard to Mr. Golyadkin senior. Mr. Golyadkin junior's revolting behaviour seemed to arouse general indignation among the clerks that surrounded them; even the frivolous youngsters showed their displeasure. A murmur of protest rose on all sides. Mr. Golyadkin could not but discern the general feeling; but suddenly — an appropriate witticism that bubbled from the lips of Mr. Golyadkin junior shattered, annihilated our hero's last hopes, and inclined the balance again in favour of his deadly and undeserving foe.

"He's our Russian Faublas, gentlemen; allow me to introduce the youthful Faublas," piped Mr. Golyadkin junior, with his characteristic insolence, pirouetting and threading his way among the clerks, and directing their attention to the petrified though genuine Mr. Golyadkin. "Let us kiss each other, darling," he went on with insufferable familiarity, addressing the man he had so treacherously insulted.

Mr. Golyadkin junior's unworthy jest seemed to touch a responsive chord, for it contained an artful allusion to an incident with which all were apparently familiar. Our hero was painfully conscious of the hand of his enemies. But he had made up his mind by now. With glowing eyes, with pale face, with a fixed smile he tore himself somehow out of the crowd and with uneven, hurried steps made straight for his Excellency's private room. In the room next to the last he was met by Andrey Filippovitch, who had only just come out from seeing his Excellency, and although there were present in this room at the moment a good number of persons of whom Mr. Golyadkin knew nothing, yet our hero did not care to take such a fact into consideration. Boldly, resolutely, directly, almost wondering at himself and inwardly admiring his own courage, without loss of time he accosted Andrey Filippovitch, who was a good deal surprised by the unexpected attack.

"Ah! . . . What is it . . . what do you want?" asked the head of the division, not hearing Mr. Golyadkin's hesitant words.

"Andrey Filippovitch, may . . . might I, Andrey Filippovitch, may I have a conversation with his Excellency at once and in private?" our hero said resolutely and distinctly, fixing the most determined glance on Andrey Filippovitch.

"What next! of course not." Andrey Filippovitch scanned Mr. Golyadkin from head to foot.

"I say all this, Andrey Filippovitch, because I am surprised that no-one here unmasks the imposter and scoundrel."

"Wha-a-at!"

"Scoundrel, Andrey Filippovitch!"

"Of whom are you pleased to speak in those terms?"

"Of a certain person, Andrey Filippovitch; I'm alluding, Andrey Filippovitch, to a certain person; I have the right . . . I imagine, Andrey Filippovitch, that the authorities would surely encourage such action," added Mr. Golyadkin, evidently hardly knowing what he was saying. "Andrey Filippovitch . . . but no doubt you see yourself, Andrey Filippovitch, that this honourable action is a mark of my loyalty in every way — of my looking upon my superior as a father, Andrey Filippovitch; I as much as to say look upon my benevolent superior as a father and blindly trust my fate to him. It's as much as to say . . . you see . . ." At this point Mr. Golyadkin's voice trembled and two tears ran down his eyelashes.

As Andrey Filippovitch listened to Mr. Golyadkin he was so astonished that he could not help stepping back a couple of paces. Then he looked about him uneasily . . . It is difficult to say how the matter would have ended. But suddenly the door of his Excellency's room was opened, and he himself came out, accompanied by several officials. All the persons in his room followed in a string. His Excellency called to Andrey Filippovitch and walked beside him, beginning to discuss some business details. When all had set off and gone out of the room, Mr. Golyadkin woke up. Growing calmer, he took refuge under the wing of Anton Antonovitch, who came last in the procession and who, Mr. Golyadkin fancied, looked stern and anxious. "I've been talking nonsense, I've been making a mess of it again, but there, never mind," he thought.

"I hope, at least, that you, Anton Antonovitch will consent to listen to me and to enter into my position," he said quietly, in a voice that still trembled a little. "Rejected by all, I appeal to you. I am

still at a loss to understand what Andrey Filippovitch's words mean, Anton Antonovitch. Explain them to me if you can . . ."

"Everything will be explained in due time," Anton Antonovitch replied sternly and emphatically, and as Mr. Golyadkin fancied with an air that gave him plainly to understand that Anton Antonovitch did not wish to continue the conversation. "You will soon know all about it. You will be officially informed about everything today."

"What do you mean by officially informed, Anton Antonovitch? Why officially?" our hero asked timidly.

"It is not for you and me to discuss what our superiors decide upon, Yakov Petrovitch."

"Why our superiors, Anton Antonovitch?" said our hero, still more intimidated; "why our superiors? I don't see what reason there is to trouble our superiors in the matter, Anton Antonovitch . . . Perhaps you mean to say something about yesterday's doings, Anton Antonovitch?"

"Oh no, nothing to do with yesterday; there's something else amiss with you."

"What is there amiss, Anton Antonovitch? I believe, Anton Antonovitch, that I have done nothing amiss."

"Why, you were meaning to be sly with some one," Anton Antonovitch cut in sharply, completely flabbergasting Mr. Golyadkin.

Mr. Golyadkin started, and turned as white as a pocket-handkerchief.

"Of course, Anton Antonovitch," he said, in a voice hardly audible, "if one listens to the voice of calumny and hears one's enemies' tales, without heeding what the other side has to say in its defence, then, of course . . . then, of course, Anton Antonovitch, one must suffer innocently and for nothing."

"To be sure; but your unseemly conduct, in injuring the reputation of a virtuous young lady belonging to that benevolent, highly distinguished and well-known family who had befriended you . . ."

"What conduct do you mean, Anton Antonovitch?"

"What I say. Do you know anything about your praiseworthy conduct in regard to that other young lady who, though poor, is of honourable foreign extraction?"

"Allow me, Anton Antonovitch . . . if you would kindly listen to me, Anton Antonovitch . . ."

"And your treacherous behaviour and slander of another person, your charging another person with your own sins. Ah, what do you call that?"

"I did not send him away, Anton Antonovitch," said our hero, with a tremor; "and I've never instructed Petrushka, my man, to do anything of the sort . . . He has eaten my bread, Anton Antonovitch, he has taken advantage of my hospitality," our hero added expressively and with deep emotion, so much so that his chin twitched a little and tears were ready to start again.



"That is only your talk, that he has eaten your bread," answered Anton Antonovitch, somewhat offended, and there was a perfidious note in his voice which sent a pang to Mr. Golyadkin's heart.

"Allow me most humbly to ask you again, Anton Antonovitch, is his Excellency aware of all this business?"

"Upon my word, you must let me go now, though. I've not time for you now. . . . You'll know everything you need to know today."

"Allow me, for God's sake, one minute, Anton Antonovitch."

"Tell me afterwards. . ."

"No, Anton Antonovitch; I . . . you see, Anton Antonovitch . . . only listen . . . I am not one for freethinking, Anton Antonovitch; I shun freethinking; I am quite ready for my part . . . and, indeed, I've given up that idea . . ."

"Very good, very good. I've heard that already."

"No, you have not heard it, Anton Antonovitch. It is something else, Anton Antonovitch: it's a good thing, really, a good thing and pleasant to hear . . . As I've explained to you, Anton Antonovitch, I admit that idea, that divine Providence has created two men exactly alike, and that a benevolent government, seeing the hand of Providence, provided a berth for two twins. That is a good thing, Anton Antonovitch, and that I am very far from freethinking. I look upon my benevolent government as a father; I say 'yes,' by all means; you are benevolent authorities, and you, of course . . . A young man must be in the service . . . Stand up for me, Anton Antonovitch, take my part, Anton Antonovitch . . . I am all right . . . Anton Antonovitch, for God's sake, one little word more. . . . Anton Antonovitch . . ."

But by now Anton Antonovitch was far away from Mr. Golyadkin . . . Our hero was so bewildered and overcome by all that had happened and all that he had heard that he did not know where he was standing, what he had heard, what he had done, what was being done to him, and what was going to be done to him.

With imploring eyes he sought for Anton Antonovitch in the crowd of clerks, that he might justify himself further in his eyes and say something to him extremely high toned and very agreeable, and creditable to himself. . . . By degrees, however, a new light began to break upon our hero's bewildered mind, a new and awful light that revealed at once a whole perspective of hitherto unknown and utterly unsuspected circumstances . . . At that moment somebody gave our bewildered hero a poke in the ribs. He looked around. Pisarenko was standing before him.

"A letter, your honour."

"Ah, you've been taken out already, my good man?"

"No, it was brought at ten o'clock this morning. Sergey Miheyev, the attendant, brought it from Mr. Vahramyev's lodging."

"Very good, very good, and I'll reward you now, my dear fellow."

Saying this, Mr. Golyadkin thrust the letter in his side pocket of his uniform and buttoned up every button of it; then he looked round him, and to his surprise, found that he was by now in the hall of the department in a group of clerks crowding at the outer door, for office hours were over. Mr. Golyadkin had not only failed till that moment to observe this circumstance, but had no notion how he suddenly came to be wearing his greatcoat and goloshes and to be holding his hat in his hand. All the clerks were motionless, in reverential expectation. The fact was that his Excellency was standing at the bottom of the stairs waiting for his carriage, which was for some reason late in arriving, and was carrying on a very interesting conversation with Andrey Filippovitch and two councillors. At a little distance from Andrey Filippovitch stood Anton Antonovitch and several other clerks, who were all smiles, seeing that his Excellency was graciously making a joke. The clerks who were crowded at the top of the stair were smiling too, in expectation of his Excellency's laughing again. The only one who was not smiling was Fedosyevitch, the corpulent hall-porter, who stood stiffly at attention, holding the handle of the door, waiting impatiently for the daily gratification that fell to his share — that is, the task of flinging one half of the door wide open with a swing of his arm, and then, with a low bow, reverentially making way for his Excellency to pass. But the one who seemed to be more delighted than any and to feel the most satisfaction of all was the worthless and ungentlemanly enemy of Mr. Golyadkin. At that instant he positively forgot all the clerks, and even gave up tripping and pirouetting in his usual odious way; he even forgot to make up to anybody. He was all eyes and ears, he even doubled himself up strangely, no doubt in the strained effort to hear, and never took his eyes off his Excellency, and only from time to time his arms, legs and head twitched with faintly perceptible tremors that betrayed the secret emotions of his soul.

"Ah, isn't he in a state!" thought our hero; "he looks like a favourite, the rascal! I should like to know how it is that he deceives society of every class. He has neither brains nor character, neither education nor feeling; he's a lucky rogue! Mercy on us! How can a man, when you think of it, come and make friends with every one so quickly! And he'll get on, I swear the fellow will get on, the rogue will make his way — he's a lucky rascal! I should like to know, too, what he keeps whispering to every one — what plots he is hatching with all these people, and what secrets they are talking about? Lord, have mercy on us! If only I could . . . get on with them a little too . . . say this and that and the other. Hadn't I better ask him . . . tell him I won't do it again; say 'I'm in fault, and a young man must serve nowadays, your Excellency'? I am not going to protest in any way, either; I shall bear it all with meekness and patience, so there! Is that the way to behave? . . . Though you'll never see through him, though, the rascal; you can't reach him with anything you say; you can't hammer reason into his head . . . We'll make an effort, though. I may happen to hit on a good moment, so I'll make an effort . . ."

Feeling in his uneasiness, his misery and his bewilderment that he couldn't leave things like this, that the critical moment had come, that he must explain himself to some one, our hero began to move a little towards the place where his worthless and undeserving enemy stood: but at that very moment his Excellency's long-expected carriage rolled up into the entrance, Fedosyevitch flung open the door and, bending double, let his Excellency pass out. All the waiting clerks streamed out towards the door, and for a moment separated Mr. Golyadkin senior from Mr. Golyadkin junior.

"You shan't get away!" said our hero, forcing his way through the crowd while he kept his eyes fixed upon the man he wanted. At last the crowd dispersed. Our hero felt he was free and flew in pursuit of his enemy.

## Chapter II

Mr. Golyadkin's breath failed him; he flew as though on wings after his rapidly retreating enemy. He was conscious of immense energy. Yet in spite of this terrible energy he might confidently have said that

at that moment a humble gnat — had a gnat been able to exist in Petersburg at that time of the year — could very easily have knocked him down. He felt, too, that he was utterly weak again, that he was carried along by a peculiar outside force, that it was not he himself who was running, but, on the contrary, that his legs were giving way under him, and refused to obey him. This all might turn out for the best, however.

"Whether it is for the best or not for the best," thought Mr. Golyadkin, almost breathless from running so quickly, "but that the game is lost there cannot be the slightest doubt now; that I am utterly done for is certain, definite, signed and ratified."

In spite of all this our hero felt as though he had risen from the dead, as though he had withstood a battalion, as though he had won a victory when he succeeded in clutching the overcoat of his enemy, who had already raised one foot to get into the cab he had engaged.

"My dear sir! My dear sir!" he shouted to the infamous Mr. Golyadkin junior, holding him by the button. "My dear sir, I hope that you . . ."

"No, please do not hope for anything," Mr. Golyadkin's heartless enemy answered evasively, standing with one foot on the step of the cab and vainly waving the other leg in the air, in his efforts to get in, trying to preserve his equilibrium, and at the same time trying with all his might to wrench his coat away from Mr. Golyadkin senior, while the latter held on to it with all the strength that had been vouchsafed to him by nature.

"Yakov Petrovitch, only ten minutes . . ."

"Excuse me, I've no time . . ."

"You must admit, Yakov Petrovitch . . . please, Yakov Petrovitch . . . For God's sake, Yakov Petrovitch . . . let us have it out — in a straightforward way . . . one little second, Yakov Petrovitch . . ."

"My dear fellow, I can't stay," answered Mr. Golyadkin's dishonourable enemy, with uncivil familiarity, disguised as good-natured heartiness; "another time, believe me, with my whole soul and all my heart; but now I really can't . . ."

"Scoundrel!" thought our hero. "Yakov Petrovitch," he cried miserably. "I have never been your enemy. Spiteful people have described me unjustly . . . I am ready, on my side . . . Yakov Petrovitch, shall we go in here together, at once, Yakov Petrovitch? And with all my heart, as you have so justly expressed it just now, and in straightforward, honourable language, as you have expressed it just now — here into this coffee-house; there the facts will explain themselves: they will really, Yakov Petrovitch. Then everything will certainly explain itself . . ."

"Into the coffee-house? Very good. I am not against it. Let us go into the coffee-house on one condition only, my dear, on one condition — that these things shall be cleared up. We will have it out, darling," said Mr. Golyadkin junior, getting out of the cab and shamelessly slapping our hero on the shoulder; "You friend of my heart, for your sake, Yakov Petrovitch, I am ready to go by the back street (as you were pleased to observe so aptly on one occasion, Yakov Petrovitch). Why, what a rogue he is! Upon my word, he does just what he likes with one!" Mr. Golyadkin's false friend went on, fawning upon him and cajoling him with a little smile. The coffee-house which the two Mr. Golyadkins entered stood some distance away from the main street and was at the moment quite empty. A rather stout German woman made her appearance behind the counter. Mr. Golyadkin and his unworthy enemy went

into the second room, where a puffy-looking boy with a closely shaven head was busy with a bundle of chips at the stove, trying to revive the smouldering fire. At Mr. Golyadkin junior's request chocolate was served.

"And a sweet little lady-tart," said Mr. Golyadkin junior, with a sly wink at Mr. Golyadkin senior.

Our hero blushed and was silent.

"Oh, yes, I forgot, I beg your pardon. I know your taste. We are sweet on charming little Germans, sir; you and I are sweet on charming and agreeable little Germans, aren't we, you upright soul? We take their lodgings, we seduce their morals, they win our hearts with their beersoup and their milksoup, and we give them notes of different sorts, that's what we do, you Faublas, you deceiver!" All this Mr. Golyadkin junior said, making an unworthy though villainously artful allusion to a certain personage of the female sex, while he fawned upon our hero, smiled at him with an amiable air, with a deceitful show of being delighted with him and pleased to have met him. Seeing that Mr. Golyadkin senior was by no means so stupid and deficient in breeding and the manners of good society as to believe in him, the infamous man resolved to change his tactics and to make a more open attack upon him. After uttering his disgusting speech, the false Mr. Golyadkin ended by slapping the real and substantial Mr. Golyadkin on the shoulder, with a revolting effrontery and familiarity. Not content with that, he began playing pranks utterly unfit for well-bred society; he took it into his head to repeat his old, nauseous trick — that is, regardless of the resistance and faint cries of the indignant Mr. Golyadkin senior, he pinched the latter on the cheek. At the spectacle of such depravity our hero boiled within, but was silent . . . only for the time, however.

"That is the talk of my enemies," he answered at last, in a trembling voice, prudently restraining himself. At the same time our hero looked round uneasily towards the door. The fact was that Mr. Golyadkin junior seemed in excellent spirits, and ready for all sorts of little jokes, unseemly in a public place, and, speaking generally, not permissible by the laws of good manners, especially in well-bred society.

"Oh, well, in that case, as you please," Mr. Golyadkin junior gravely responded to our hero's thought, setting down upon the table the empty cup which he had gulped down with unseemly greed. "Well, there's no need for me to stay long with you, however. . . . Well, how are you getting on now, Yakov Petrovitch?"

"There's only one thing I can tell you, Yakov Petrovitch," our hero answered, with sangfroid and dignity; "I've never been your enemy."

"H'm . . . Oh, what about Petrushka? Petrushka is his name, I fancy? Yes, it is Petrushka! Well, how is he? Well? The same as ever?"

"He's the same as ever, too, Yakov Petrovitch," answered Mr. Golyadkin senior, somewhat amazed. "I don't know, Yakov Petrovitch . . . from my standpoint . . . from a candid, honourable standpoint, Yakov Petrovitch, you must admit, Yakov Petrovitch . . ."

"Yes, but you know yourself, Yakov Petrovitch," Mr. Golyadkin junior answered in a soft and expressive voice, so posing falsely as a sorrowful man overcome with remorse and deserving compassion. "You know yourself as we live in difficult time . . . I appeal to you, Yakov Petrovitch; you are an intelligent man and your reflections are just," Mr. Golyadkin junior said in conclusion, flattering Mr. Golyadkin senior in an abject way. "Life is not a game, you know yourself, Yakov Petrovitch," Mr.

Golyadkin junior added, with vast significance, assuming the character of a clever and learned man, who is capable of passing judgements on lofty subjects.

"For my part, Yakov Petrovitch," our hero answered warmly, "for my part, scorning to be roundabout and speaking boldly and openly, using straightforward, honourable language and putting the whole matter on an honourable basis, I tell you I can openly and honourably assert, Yakov Petrovitch, that I am absolutely pure, and that, you know it yourself, Yakov Petrovitch, the error is mutual — it may all be the world's judgment, the opinion of the slavish crowd. . . . I speak openly, Yakov Petrovitch, everything is possible. I will say, too, Yakov Petrovitch, if you judge it in this way, if you look at the matter from a lofty, noble point of view, then I will boldly say, without false shame I will say, Yakov Petrovitch, it will positively be a pleasure to me to discover that I have been in error, it will positively be a pleasure to me to recognize it. You know yourself you are an intelligent man and, what is more, you are a gentleman. Without shame, without false shame, I am ready to recognize it," he wound up with dignity and nobility.

"It is the decree of destiny, Yakov Petrovitch . . . but let us drop all this," said Mr. Golyadkin junior. "Let us rather use the brief moment of our meeting for a more pleasant and profitable conversation, as is only suitable between two colleagues in the service . . . Really, I have not succeeded in saying two words to you all this time. . . . I am not to blame for that, Yakov Petrovitch . . ."

"Nor I," answered our hero warmly, "nor I, either! My heart tells me, Yakov Petrovitch, that I'm not to blame in all this matter. Let us blame fate for all this, Yakov Petrovitch," added Mr. Golyadkin senior, in a quick, conciliatory tone of voice. His voice began little by little to soften and to quaver.

"Well! How are you in health?" said the sinner in a sweet voice.

"I have a little cough," answered our hero, even more sweetly.

"Take care of yourself. There is so much illness going about, you may easily get quinsy; for my part I confess I've begun to wrap myself up in flannel."

"One may, indeed, Yakov Petrovitch, very easily get quinsy," our hero pronounced after a brief silence; "Yakov Petrovitch, I see that I have made a mistake, I remember with softened feelings those happy moments which we were so fortunate as to spend together, under my poor, though I venture to say, hospitable roof . . ."

"In your letter, however, you wrote something very different," said Mr. Golyadkin junior reproachfully, speaking on this occasion — though only on this occasion — quite justly.

"Yakov Petrovitch, I was in error. . . . I see clearly now that I was in error in my unhappy letter too. Yakov Petrovitch, I am ashamed to look at you, Yakov Petrovitch, you wouldn't believe . . . Give me that letter that I may tear it to pieces before your eyes, Yakov Petrovitch, and if that is utterly impossible I entreat you to read it the other way before — precisely the other way before — that is, expressly with a friendly intention, giving the opposite sense to the whole letter. I was in error. Forgive me, Yakov Petrovitch, I was quite . . . I was grievously in error, Yakov Petrovitch."

"You say so?" Mr. Golyadkin's perfidious friend inquired, rather casually and indifferently.

"I say that I was quite in error, Yakov Petrovitch, and that for my part, quite without false shame, I am . . ."

"Ah, well, that's all right! That's a nice thing your being in error," answered Mr. Golyadkin junior.

"I even had an idea, Yakov Petrovitch," our candid hero answered in a gentlemanly way, completely failing to observe the horrible perfidy of his deceitful enemy; "I even had an idea that here were two people created exactly alike . . ."

"Ah, is that your idea?"

At this point the notoriously worthless Mr. Golyadkin took up his hat. Still failing to observe his treachery, Mr. Golyadkin senior, too, got up and with a noble, simple-hearted smile to his false friend, tried in his innocence to be friendly to him, to encourage him, and in that way to form a new friendship with him.

"Good-bye, your Excellency," Mr. Golyadkin junior called out suddenly. Our hero started, noticing in his enemy's face something positively Bacchanalian, and, solely to get rid of him, put two fingers into the unprincipled man's outstretched hand; but then . . . then his enemy's shameless ness passed all bounds. Seizing the two fingers of Mr. Golyadkin's hand and at first pressing them, the worthless fellow on the spot, before Mr. Golyadkin's eyes, had the effrontery to repeat the shameful joke of the morning. The limit of human patience was exhausted.

He had just hidden in his pocket the handkerchief with which he had wiped his fingers when Mr. Golyadkin senior recovered from the shock and dashed after him into the next room, into which his irreconcilable foe had in his usual hasty way hastened to decamp. As though perfectly innocent, he was standing at the counter eating pies, and with perfect composure, like a virtuous man, was making polite remarks to the German woman behind the counter.

"I can't go into it before ladies," thought our hero, and he, too, went up to the counter, so agitated that he hardly knew what he was doing.

"The tart is certainly not bad! What do you think?" Mr. Golyadkin junior began upon his unseemly sallies again, reckoning, no doubt, upon Mr. Golyadkin's infinite patience. The stout German, for her part, looked at both her visitors with pewtery, vacant-looking eyes, smiling affably and evidently not understanding Russian. Our hero flushed red as fire at the words of the unabashed Mr. Golyadkin junior, and, unable to control himself, rushed at him with the evident intention of tearing him to pieces and finishing him off completely, but Mr. Golyadkin junior, in his usual mean way, was already far off; he took flight, he was already on the steps. It need hardly be said that, after the first moment of stupefaction with which Mr. Golyadkin senior was naturally overcome, he recovered himself and went at full speed after his insulting enemy, who had already got into a cab, whose driver was obviously in collusion with him. But at that very instant the stout German, seeing both her customers make off, shrieked and rang her bell with all her might. Our hero was on the point of flight, but he turned back, and, without asking for change, flung her money for himself and for the shameless man who had left without paying, and although thus delayed he succeeded in catching up his enemy. Hanging on to the side of the cab with all the force bestowed on him by nature, our hero was carried for some time along the street, clambering upon the vehicle, while Mr. Golyadkin junior did his utmost to dislodge him. Meanwhile the cabman, with whip, with reins, with kicks and with shouts urged on his exhausted nag, who quite unexpectedly dropped into a gallop, biting at the bit, and kicking with his hind legs in a horrid way. At last our enemy and with his back to the driver, his knees touching the knees and his right hand clutching the very shabby fur collar of his depraved and exasperated foe.

The enemies were borne along for some time in silence. Our hero could scarcely breathe. It was a bad road and he was jolted at every step and in peril of breaking his neck. Moreover, his exasperated foe still refused to acknowledge himself vanquished and was trying to shove him off into the mud. To complete the unpleasantness of his position the weather was detestable. The snow was falling in heavy flakes and doing its utmost to creep under the unfastened overcoat of the genuine Mr. Golyadkin. It was foggy and nothing could be seen. It was difficult to tell through what street and in what direction they were being taken . . . It seemed to Mr. Golyadkin that what was happening to him was somehow familiar. One instant he tried to remember whether he had had a presentiment of it the day before, in a dream, for instance . . .

At last his wretchedness reached the utmost pitch of agony. Leaning upon his merciless opponent, he was beginning to cry out. But his cries died away upon his lips. . . . There was a moment when Mr. Golyadkin forgot everything, and made up his mind that all this was of no consequence and that it was all nothing, that it was happening in some inexplicable manner, and that, therefore, to protest was effort thrown away. . . . But suddenly and almost at the same instant that our hero was drawing this conclusion, an unexpected jolt gave quite a new turn to the affair. Mr. Golyadkin fell off the cab like a sack of flour and rolled on the ground, quite correctly recognizing, at the moment of his fall, that his excitement had been very inappropriate. Jumping up at last, he saw that they had arrived somewhere; the cab was standing in the middle of some courtyard, and from the first glance our hero noticed that it was the courtyard of the house in which was Olsufy Ivanovitch's flat. At the same instant he noticed that his enemy was mounting the steps, probably on his way to Olsufy Ivanovitch's. In indescribable misery he was about to pursue his enemy, but, fortunately for himself, prudently thought better of it. Not forgetting to pay the cabman, Mr. Golyadkin ran with all his might along the street, regardless of where he was going. The snow was falling heavily as before; as before it was muggy, wet, and dark. Our hero did not walk, but flew, coming into collision with every one on the way — men, women and children. About him and after him he heard frightened voices, squeals, screams . . . But Mr. Golyadkin seemed unconscious and would pay no heed to anything. . . . He came to himself, however, on Semyonovsky Bridge, and then only through succeeding in tripping against and upsetting two peasant women and the wares they were selling, and tumbling over them.

"That's no matter," thought Mr. Golyadkin, "that can easily be set right," and felt in his pocket at once, intending to make up for the cakes, apples, nuts and various trifles he had scattered with a rouble. Suddenly a new light dawned upon Mr. Golyadkin; in his pocket he felt the letter given him in the morning by the clerk. Remembering that there was a tavern he knew close by, he ran to it without a moment's delay, settled himself at a little table lighted up by a tallow candle, and, taking no notice of anything, regardless of the waiter who came to ask for his orders, broke the seal and began reading the following letter, which completely astounded him —

"You noble man, who are suffering for my sake, and will be dear to my heart for ever!

"I am suffering, I am perishing — save me! The slanderer, the intriguer, notorious for the immorality of his tendencies, has entangled me in his snares and I am undone! I am lost! But he is abhorrent to me, while you! . . . They have separated us, they have intercepted my letters to you — and all this has been the vicious man who has taken advantage of his one good quality — his likeness to you. A man can always be plain in appearance, yet fascinate by his intelligence, his strong feelings and his agreeable manners . . . I am ruined! I am being married against my will, and the chief part in this intrigue is taken by my parent, benefactor and civil councillor, Olsufy Ivanovitch, no doubt desirous of securing me a place and relations in well-bred society. . . . But I have made up my mind and I protest by all the powers bestowed on me by nature. Be waiting for me with a carriage at nine o'clock this evening at the window of Olsufy Ivanovitch's flat. We are having another ball and a handsome lieutenant is coming. I will come out and we will fly. Moreover, there are other government offices in which one can be of service

to one's country. In any case, remember, my friend, that innocence is strong in its very innocence. Farewell. Wait with the carriage at the entrance. I shall throw myself into the protection of your arms at two o'clock in the night.

"Yours till death,

"Klara Olsufyevna."

After reading the letter our hero remained for some minutes as though petrified. In terrible anxiety, in terrible agitation, white as a sheet, with the letter in his hand, he walked several times up and down the room; to complete the unpleasantness of his position, though our hero failed to observe it, he was at that moment the object of the exclusive attention of every one in the room, his gesticulating with both hands, perhaps some enigmatic words unconsciously addressed to the air, probably all this prejudiced Mr. Golyadkin in the opinion of the customers, and even the waiter began to look at him suspiciously. Coming to himself, Mr. Golyadkin noticed that he was standing in the middle of the room and was in an almost unseemly, discourteous manner staring at an old man of very respectable appearance who, having dined and said grace before the ikon, had sat down again and fixed his eyes upon Mr. Golyadkin. Our hero looked vaguely about him and noticed that every one, actually every one, was looking at him with a hostile and suspicious air. All at once a retired military man in a red collar asked loudly for the Police News. Mr. Golyadkin started and turned crimson: he happened to look down and saw that he was in such disorderly attire as he would not have worn even at home, much less in a public place. His boots, his trousers and the whole of his left side were covered with mud; the trouser-strap was torn off his right foot, and his coat was even torn in many places. In extreme misery our hero went up to the table at which he had read the letter, and saw that the attendant was coming up to him with a strange and impudently peremptory expression of face. Utterly disconcerted and crestfallen, our hero began to look about the table at which he was now standing. On the table stood a dirt plate, left there from somebody's dinner, a soiled table-napkin and a knife, fork and spoon that had just been used. "Who has been having dinner?" thought our hero. "Can it have been I? Anything is possible! I must have had dinner without noticing it; what am I to do?"

Raising his eyes, Mr. Golyadkin again saw beside him the waiter who was about to address him.

"How much is my bill, my lad?" our hero inquired, in a trembling voice.

A loud laugh sounded round Mr. Golyadkin, the waiter himself grinned. Mr. Golyadkin realized that he had blundered again, and had done something dreadfully stupid. He was overcome by confusion, and to avoid standing there with nothing to do he put his hand in his pocket to get out his handkerchief; but to the indescribable amazement of himself and all surrounding him, he pulled out instead of his handkerchief the bottle of medicine which Krestyan Ivanovitch had prescribed for him four days earlier. "Get the medicine at the same chemist's," floated through Mr. Golyadkin's brain . . .

Suddenly he started and almost cried out in horror. A new light dawned. . . . The dark reddish and repulsive liquid had a sinister gleam to Mr. Golyadkin's eyes. . . . The bottle dropped from his hands and was instantly smashed. Our hero cried out and stepped back a pace to avoid the spilled medicine . . . he was trembling in every limb, and drops of sweat came out on to his brow and temples. "So my life is in danger!" Meantime there was a stir, a commotion in the room; every one surrounded Mr. Golyadkin, every one talked to Mr. Golyadkin, some even caught hold of Mr. Golyadkin. But our hero was dumb and motionless, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, feeling nothing. . . . At last, as though tearing himself from the place, he rushed out of the tavern, pushing away all and each who tried to detain him; almost unconscious, he got into the first cab that passed him and drove to his flat.



In the entry of his flat he met Mihyeev, an attendant from the office, with an official envelope in his hand.

"I know, my good man, I know all about it," our exhausted hero answered, in a weak, miserable voice; "it's official . . ."

The envelope did, in fact, contain instructions to Mr. Golyadkin, signed by Andrey Filippovitch, to give up the business in his hands to Ivan Semyonovitch. Taking the envelope and giving ten kopecks to the man, Mr. Golyadkin went into his flat and saw that Petrushka was collecting all his odds and ends, all his things into a heap, evidently intending to abandon Mr. Golyadkin and move to the flat of Karolina Ivanovna, who had enticed him to take the place of Yevstafy.

## Chapter 12

Petrushka came in swaggering, with a strangely casual manner and an air of vulgar triumph on his face. It was evident that he had some idea in his head, that he felt thoroughly within his rights, and he looked like an unconcerned spectator — that is, as though he were anybody's servant rather than Mr. Golyadkin's.

"I say, you know, my good lad," our hero began breathlessly, "what time is it?"

Without speaking, Petrushka went behind his partition, then returned, and in a rather independent tone announced that it was nearly half-past seven.

"Well, that's all right, my lad, that's all right. Come, you see, my boy . . . allow me to tell you, my good lad, that everything, I fancy, is at an end between us."

Petrushka said nothing.

"Well, now as everything is over between us, tell me openly, as a friend, where you have been."

"Where I've been? To see good people, sir."

"I know, my good lad, I know. I have always been satisfied with you, and I give you a character . . . Well, what are you doing with them now?"

"Why, sir! You know yourself. We all know a decent man won't teach you any harm."

"I know, my dear fellow, I know. Nowadays good people are rare, my lad; prize them, my friend. Well, how are they?"

"To be sure, they . . . Only I can't serve you any longer, sir; as your honour must know."

"I know, my dear fellow, I know your zeal and devotion; I have seen it all, my lad, I've noticed it. I respect you, my friend. I respect a good and honest man, even though he's a lackey."

"Why, yes, to be sure! The like's of us, of course, as you know yourself, are as good as anybody. That's so. We all know, sir, that there's no getting on without a good man."

"Very well, very well, my boy, I feel it. . . . Come, here's your money and here's your character. Now we'll kiss and say good-bye, brother. . . . Come, now, my lad, I'll ask one service of you, one last service," said Mr. Golyadkin, in a solemn voice. "You see, my dear boy, all sorts of things happen. Sorrow is concealed in gilded palaces, and there's no escaping it. You know, my boy, I've always been kind to you, my boy.

Petrushka remained mute.

"I believe I've always been kind to you, my dear fellow . . . Come, how much linen have we now, my dear boy?"

"Well, it's all there. Linen shirts six, three pairs of socks; four shirtfronts; flannel vests; of underlinen two sets. You know all that yourself. I've got nothing of yours, sir. . . . I look after my master's belongings, sir. I am like that, sir . . . we all know . . . and I've . . . never been guilty of anything of the sort, sir, you know yourself, sir . . ."

"I trust you, my lad, I trust you. I didn't mean that, my friend, I didn't mean that, you know, my lad; I tell you what . . ."

"To be sure, sir, we know that already. Why, when I used to be in the service at general Stolnyakov's . . . I lost the lace through the family's going away to Saratov . . . they've an estate there . . ."

"No; I didn't mean that, my lad, I didn't mean that; don't think anything of the sort, my dear fellow . . ."

"To be sure. It's easy, as you know yourself, sir, to take away the character of folks like us. And I've always given satisfaction — ministers, generals, senators, counts — I've served them all. I've been at Prince Svintchatkin's, at Colonel Pereborkin's, at General Nedobarov's — they've gone away too, they've gone to their property. As we all know . . ."

"Yes, my lad, very good, my lad, very good. And now I'm going away, my friend . . . A different path lies before each man, no one can tell what road he may have to take. Come, my lad, put out my clothes now, lay out my uniform too . . . and my other trousers, my sheets, quilts and pillows . . ."

"Am I to pack them all in the bag?"

"Yes, my lad, yes; the bag, please. Who knows what may happen to us. Come, my dear boy, you can go and find a carriage . . ."

"A carriage? . . ."

"Yes, my lad, a carriage; a roomy one, and take it by the hour. And don't imagine anything . . ."

"Are you planning to go far away, sir?"

"I don't know my lad, I don't know that either. I think you had better pack my feather bed too. What do you think, my lad? I am relying on you, my dear fellow . . ."

"Is your honour setting off at once?"

"Yes, my friend, yes! Circumstances have turned out so . . . so it is, my dear fellow, so it is . . ."

"To be sure, sir; when we were in the regiment the same thing happened to the lieutenant; they eloped from a country gentleman's . . ."

"Eloped? . . . How! My dear fellow!"

"Yes, sir, eloped, and they were married in another house. Everything was got ready beforehand. There was a hue and cry after them; the late prince took their part, and so it was all settled . . ."

"They were married, but . . . how is it, my dear fellow . . . How did you come to know, my boy?"

"Why, to be sure! The earth is full of rumours, sir. We know, sir, we've all . . . to be sure, there's no one without sin. Only I'll tell you now, sir, let me speak plainly and vulgarly, sir; since it has come to this, I must tell you, sir; you have an enemy — you've a rival, sir, a powerful rival, so there . . ."

"I know, my dear fellow, I know; you know yourself, my dear fellow. . . . So, you see, I'm relying upon you. What are we to do now, my friend! How do you advise me?"

"Well, sir, if you are in that way now, if you've come, so to say, to such a pass, sir, you'll have to make some purchases, sir — say some sheets, pillows, another feather bed, a double one, a good quilt — here at the neighbours downstairs — she's a shopkeeper, sir — she has a good fox-fur cloak, so you might look at it and buy it, you might have a look at it at once. You'll need it now, sir; it's a good cloak, sir, satin-lined with fox . . ."

"Very good, my lad, very good, I agree; I rely upon you, I rely upon you entirely; a cloak by all means, if necessary . . . Only make haste, make haste! For God's sake make haste! I'll buy the cloak — only please make haste! It will soon be eight o'clock. Make haste for God's sake, my dear lad! Hurry up, my lad . . ."

Petrushka ran up to gather together a bundle of linen, pillows, quilt, sheets, and all sorts of odds and ends, tied them up and rushed headlong out of the room. Meanwhile, Mr. Golyadkin seized the letter once more, but he could not read it. Clutching his devoted head, he leaned against the wall in a state of stupefaction. He could not think of anything, he could do nothing either, and could not even tell what was happening to him. At last, seeing that time was passing and neither Petrushka nor the fur cloak had made their appearance, Mr. Golyadkin made up his mind to go himself. Opening the door into the entry, he heard below noise, talk, disputing and scuffling . . . Several of the women of the neighbouring flats were shouting, talking and protesting about something — Mr. Golyadkin knew what. Petrushka's voice was heard: then there was a sound of footsteps.

"My goodness! They'll bring all the world in here," moaned Mr. Golyadkin, wringing his hands in despair and rushing back into his room. Running back into his room, he fell almost senseless on the sofa with his face in the pillow. After lying a minute in this way, he jumped up and, without waiting for Petrushka, he put on his goloshes, his hat and his greatcoat, snatched up his papers and ran headlong downstairs.

"Nothing is wanted, nothing, my dear fellow! I will manage myself — everything myself. I don't need you for the time, and meantime, things may take a better turn, perhaps," Mr. Golyadkin muttered to Petrushka, meeting him on the stair; then he ran out into the yard, away from the house. There was a

faintness at his heart, he had not yet made up his mind what was his position, what he was to do, how he was to act in the present critical position.

"Yes, how am I to act? Lord, have mercy on me! And that all this should happen!" he cried out at last in despair, tottering along the street at random; "that all this must needs happen! Why, but for this, but for just this, everything would have been put right; at one stroke, at one skilful, vigorous, firm stroke it would have been set right. I would have my finger cut off to have set right! And I know, indeed, how it would have been settled. This is how it would have been managed: I'd have gone on the spot . . . said how it was . . . 'with your permission, sir, I'm neither here nor there in it . . . things aren't done like that,' I would say, 'my dear sir, things aren't done like that, there's no accepting an imposter in our office; an imposter . . . my dear sir, is a man . . . who is worthless and of no service to his country. Do you understand that? Do you understand that, my dear sir, I should say! That's how it would be . . . But no . . . after all, things are not like that . . . not a bit like that . . . I am talking nonsense, like a fool! A suicidal fool! It's not like that at all, you suicidal fool . . . This is how things are done, though, you profligate man! . . . Well, what am I to do with myself now? Well, what am I going to do with myself now. What am I fit for now? Come, what are you fit for now, for instance, you, Golyadkin, you, you worthless fellow! Well, what now? I must get a carriage; 'hire a carriage and bring it here,' says she, 'we shall get our feet wet without a carriage,' says she . . . And who could ever have thought it! Fie, fie, my young lady! Fie, fie, a young lady of virtuous behaviour! Well, well, the girl we all thought so much of! You've distinguished yourself, madam, there's no doubt of that! you've distinguished yourself! . . . And it all comes from immoral education. And now that I've looked into it and seen through it all I see that it is due to nothing else but immorality. Instead of looking after her as a child . . . and the rod at times . . . they stuff her with sweets and dainties, and the old man is always doting over her: saying 'my dear, my love, my beauty,' saying, 'we'll marry you to a count!' . . . And now she has come forward herself and shown her cards, as though to say that's her little game! Instead of keeping her at home as a child, they sent her to a boarding school, to a French madame, and emigre, a Madame Falbalas or something, and she learned all sorts of things at that Madame Falbalas', and this is how it always turns out. 'Come,' says she, 'and be happy! Be in a carriage,' she says, 'at such a time, under the windows, and sing a sentimental serenade in the Spanish style; I await you and I know you love me, and we will fly together and live in a hut.' But the fact is it's impossible; since it has come to that, madam, it's impossible, it is against the law to abduct an innocent, respectable girl from her parents' roof without their sanction! And, if you come to that, why, what for and what need is there to do it? Come, she should marry a suitable person, the man marked out by destiny, and that would be the end of it. But I'm in the government service, I might lose my berth through it: I might be arrested for it, madam! I tell you that! If you did not know it. It's that German woman's doing. She's at the bottom of it all, the witch; she cooked the whole kettle of fish. For they've slandered a man, for they've invented a bit of womanish gossip about him, a regular performance by the advice of Andrey Filippovitch, that's what it came from. Otherwise how could Petrushka be mixed up in it? What has he to do with it? What need for the rogue to be in it? No, I cannot, madam, I cannot possibly, not on any account . . . No, madam, this time you must really excuse me. It's all your doing, madam, it's not all the German's doing, it's not the witch's doing at all, but simply yours. For the witch is a good woman, for the witch is not to blame in any way; it's your fault, madam; it's you who are to blame, let me tell you! I shall not be charged with a crime through you, madam. . . . A man might be ruined . . . a man might lose sight of himself, and not be able to restrain himself — a wedding, indeed! And how is it all going to end? And how will it all be arranged? I would give a great deal to know all that! . . ."

So our hero reflected in his despair. Coming to himself suddenly, he observed that he was standing somewhere in Liteyny Street. The weather was awful: it was a thaw; snow and rain were falling — just as at that memorable time when at the dread hour of midnight all Mr. Golyadkin's troubles had begun. "This is a nice night for a journey!" thought Mr. Golyadkin, looking at the weather; "it's death all round. . . . Good Lord! Where am I to find a carriage, for instance? I believe there's something black

there at the corner. We'll see, we'll investigate . . . Lord, have mercy on us!" our hero went on, bending his weak and tottering steps in the direction in which he saw something that looked like a cab.

"No, I know what I'll do; I'll go straight and fall on my knees, if I can, and humbly beg, saying 'I put my fate in your hands, in the hands of my superiors'; saying, 'Your Excellency, be a protector and a benefactor'; and then I'll say this and that, and explain how it is and that it is an unlawful act; 'Do not destroy me, I look upon you as my father, do not abandon me . . . save my dignity, my honour, my name, my reputation . . . and save me from a miscreant, a vicious man. . . . He's another person, your Excellency, and I'm another person too; he's apart and I am myself by myself too; I am really myself by myself, your Excellency; really myself by myself,' that's what I shall say. 'I cannot be like him. Change him, dismiss him, give orders for him to be changed and a godless, licentious impersonation to be suppressed . . . that it may not be an example to others, your Excellency. I look upon you as a father'; those in authority over us, our benefactors and protectors, are bound, of course, to encourage such impulses. . . . There's something chivalrous about it: I shall say, 'I look upon you, my benefactor and superior, as a father, and trust my fate to you, and I will not say anything against it; I put myself in your hands, and retire from the affair myself' . . . that's what I would say."

"Well, my man, are you a cabman?"

"Yes . . ."

"I want a cab for the evening . . ."

"And does your honour want to go far?"

"For the evening, for the evening; wherever I have to go, my man, wherever I have to go."

"Does your honour want to drive out of town?"

"Yes, my friend, out of town, perhaps. I don't quite know myself yet, I can't tell you for certain, my man. Maybe you see it will all be settled for the best. We all know, my friend . . ."

"Yes, sir, of course we all know. Please God it may."

"Yes, my friend, yes; thank you, my dear fellow; come, what's your fare, my good man? . . ."

"Do you want to set off at once?"

"Yes, at once, that is, no, you must wait at a certain place. . . . A little while, not long, you'll have to wait . . ."

"Well, if you hire me for the whole time, I couldn't ask less than six roubles for weather like this . . ."

"Oh, very well, my friend; and I thank you, my dear fellow. So, come, you can take me now, my good man."

"Get in; allow me, I'll put it straight a bit — now will your honour get in. Where shall I drive?"

"To the Ismailovsky Bridge, my friend."

The driver plumped down on the box, with difficulty roused his pair of lean nags from the trough of hay, and was setting off for Ismailovsky Bridge. But suddenly Mr. Golyadkin pulled the cord, stopped the cab, and besought him in an imploring voice not to drive to Ismailovsky Bridge, but to turn back to another street. The driver turned into another street, and then minutes later Mr. Golyadkin's newly hired equipage was standing before the house in which his Excellency had a flat. Mr. Golyadkin got out of the carriage, begged the driver to be sure to wait and with a sinking heart ran upstairs to the third storey and pulled the bell; the door was opened and our hero found himself in the entry of his Excellency's flat.

"Is his Excellency graciously pleased to be at home?" said Mr. Golyadkin, addressing the man who opened the door.

"What do you want?" asked the servant, scrutinizing Mr. Golyadkin from head to foot.

"I, my friend . . . I am Golyadkin, the titular councillor, Golyadkin . . . To say . . . something or other . . . to explain . . ."

"You must wait; you cannot . . ."

"My friend, I cannot wait; my business is important, it's business that admits of no delay . . ."

"But from whom have you come? Have you brought papers? . . ."

"No, my friend, I am on my own account. Announce me, my friend, say something or other, explain. I'll reward you, my good man . . ."

"I cannot. His Excellency is not at home, he has visitors. Come at ten o'clock in the morning . . ."

"Take in my name, my good man, I can't wait — it is impossible. . . . You'll have to answer for it, my good man."

"Why, go and announce him! What's the matter with you; want to save your shoe leather?" said another lackey who was lolling on the bench and had not uttered a word till then.

"Shoe leather! I was told not to show any one up, you know; their time is the morning."

"Announce him, have you lost your tongue?"

"I'll announce him all right — I've not lost my tongue. It's not my orders; I've told you, it's not my orders. Walk inside."

Mr. Golyadkin went into the outermost room; there was a clock on the table. He glanced at it: it was half-past eight. His heart ached within him. Already he wanted to turn back, but at that very moment the footman standing at the door of the next room had already boomed out Mr. Golyadkin's name.

"Oh, what lungs," thought our hero in indescribable misery. "Why, you ought to have said: 'he has come most humbly and meekly to make an explanation . . . something . . . be graciously pleased to see him' . . . Now the whole business is ruined; all my hopes are scattered to the winds. But . . . however . . . never mind . . ."

There was no time to think, moreover. The lackey, returning, said, "Please walk in," and led Mr. Golyadkin into the study.

When our hero went in, he felt as though he were blinded, for he could see nothing at all . . . But three or four figures seemed flitting before his eyes: "Oh, yes, they are the visitors," flashed through Mr. Golyadkin's mind. At last our hero could distinguish clearly the star on the black coat of his Excellency, then by degrees advanced to seeing the black coat and at last gained the power of complete vision . . . .

"What is it?" said a familiar voice above Mr. Golyadkin.

"The titular councillor, Golyadkin, your Excellency."

"Well?"

"I have come to make an explanation . . ."

"How? . . . What?"

"Why, yes. This is how it is. I've come for an explanation, your Excellency . . ."

"But you . . . but who are you? . . ."

"M-m-m-mist-er Golyadkin, your Excellency, a titular councillor."

"Well, what is it you want?"

"Why, this is how it is, I look upon you as a father; I retire . . . defend me from my enemy! . . ."

"What's this? . . ."

"We all know . . ."

"What do we all know?"

Mr. Golyadkin was silent: his chin began twitching a little.

"Well?"

"I thought it was chivalrous, your Excellency . . . 'There's something chivalrous in it,' I said, 'and I look upon my superior as a father' . . . this is what I thought; 'protect me, I tear . . . earfully . . . b . . . eg and that such imp . . . impulses ought . . . to . . . be encouraged . . ."

His excellency turned away, our hero for some minutes could distinguish nothing. There was a weight on his chest. His breathing was laboured; he did not know where he was standing . . . He felt ashamed and sad. God knows what followed . . . Recovering himself, our hero noticed that his Excellency was talking with his guests, and seemed to be briskly and emphatically discussing something with them. One of the visitors Mr. Golyadkin recognized at once. This was Andrey Filippovitch; he knew no one else; yet there was another person that seemed familiar — a tall, thick-set figure, middle-aged, possessed of very thick eyebrows and whiskers and a significant sharp expression. On his chest was an order and in his mouth a cigar. This gentleman was smoking and nodding significantly without taking the cigar out

of his mouth, glancing from time to time at Mr. Golyadkin. Mr. Golyadkin felt awkward; he turned away his eyes and immediately saw another very strange visitor. Through a door which our hero had taken for a looking-glass, just as he had done once before — he made his appearance — we know who: a very intimate friend and acquaintance of Mr. Golyadkin's. Mr. Golyadkin junior had actually been till then in a little room close by, hurriedly writing something; now, apparently, he was needed — and he came in with papers under his arm, went up to his Excellency, and while waiting for exclusive attention to be paid him succeeded very adroitly in putting his spoke into the talk and consultation, taking his place a little behind Andrey Filippovitch's back and partly screening him from the gentleman smoking the cigar. Apparently Mr. Golyadkin junior took an intense interest in the conversation, to which he was listening now in a gentlemanly way, nodding his head, fidgeting with his feet, smiling, continually looking at his Excellency — as it were beseeching him with his eyes to let him put his word in.

"The scoundrel," thought Mr. Golyadkin, and involuntarily he took a step forward. At this moment his Excellency turned round and came rather hesitatingly towards Mr. Golyadkin.

"Well, that's all right, that's all right; well, run along, now. I'll look into your case, and give orders for you to be taken . . ."

At this point his Excellency glanced at the gentleman with the thick whiskers. The latter nodded in assent.

Mr. Golyadkin felt and distinctly understood that they were taking him for something different and not looking at him in the proper light at all.

"In one way or another I must explain myself," he thought; "I must say, 'This is how it is, your Excellency.'"

At this point in his perplexity he dropped his eyes to the floor and to his great astonishment he saw a good-sized patch of something white on his Excellency's boots.

"Can there be a hole in them?" thought Mr. Golyadkin. Mr. Golyadkin was, however, soon convinced that his Excellency's boots were not split, but were only shining brilliantly — a phenomenon fully explained by the fact that they were patent leather and highly polished.

"It is what they call blick," thought our hero; "the term is used particularly in artists studios; in other places such a reflected light is called a rib of light."

At this point Mr. Golyadkin raised his eyes and saw that the time had come to speak, for things might easily end badly . . .

Our hero took a step forward.

"I say this is how it is, your Excellency," he said, "and there's no accepting imposters nowadays."

His Excellency made no answer, but rang the bell violently. Our hero took another step forward.

"He is a vile, vicious man, your Excellency," said our hero, beside himself and faint with terror, though he still pointed boldly and resolutely at his unworthy twin, who was fidgeting about near his Excellency. "I say this is how it is, and I am alluding to a well-known person."



There was a general sensation at Mr. Golyadkin's words. Andrey Filippovitch and the gentleman with the cigar nodded their heads; his Excellency impatiently tugged at the bell to summon the servants. At this point Mr. Golyadkin junior came forward in his turn.

"Your Excellency," he said, "I humbly beg permission to speak." There was something very resolute in Mr. Golyadkin junior's voice; everything showed that he felt himself completely in the right.

"Allow me to ask you," he began again, anticipating his Excellency's reply in his eagerness, and this time addressing Mr. Golyadkin; "allow me to ask you, in whose presence you are making this explanation? Before whom are you standing, in whose room are you? . . ."

Mr. Golyadkin junior was in a state of extraordinary excitement, flushed and glowing with wrath and indignation; there were positively tears in his eyes.

A lackey, appearing in the doorway, roared at the top of his voice the name of some new arrivals, the Bassavryukovs.

"A good aristocratic name, hailing from Little Russia," thought Mr. Golyadkin, and at that moment he felt some one lay a very friendly hand on his back, then a second hand was laid on his back. Mr. Golyadkin's infamous twin was tripping about in front leading the way; and our hero saw clearly that he was being led to the big doors of the room.

"Just as it was at Olsufy Ivanovitch's," he thought, and he found himself in the hall. Looking round, he saw beside him two of the Excellency's lackeys and his twin.

"The greatcoat, the greatcoat, the greatcoat, the greatcoat, my friend! The greatcoat of my best friend!" whispered the depraved man, snatching the coat from one of the servants, and by way of a nasty and ungentlemanly joke flinging it straight at Mr. Golyadkin's head. Extricating himself from under his coat, Mr. Golyadkin distinctly heard the two lackeys snigger. But without listening to anything, or paying attention to it, he went out of the hall and found himself on the lighted stairs. Mr. Golyadkin junior following him.

"Goodbye, your Excellency!" he shouted after Mr. Golyadkin senior.

"Scoundrel!" our hero exclaimed, beside himself.

"Well, scoundrel, then . . ."

"Depraved man! . . ."

"Well, depraved man, then . . ." answered Mr. Golyadkin's unworthy enemy, and with his characteristic baseness he looked down from the top of the stairs straight into Mr. Golyadkin's face as though begging him to go on. Our hero spat with indignation and ran out of the front door; he was so shattered, so crushed, that he had no recollection of how he got into the cab or who helped him in. Coming to himself, he found that he was being driven to Fontanka. "To Ismailovsky Bridge, then," thought Mr. Golyadkin. At this point Mr. Golyadkin tried to think of something else, but could not; there was something so terrible that he could not explain it . . . "Well, never mind," our hero concluded, and he drove to Ismailovsky Bridge.

### Chapter 13

... It seemed as though the weather meant to change for the better. The snow, which had till then been coming down in regular clouds, began growing visible and here and there tiny stars sparkled in it. It was only wet, muddy, damp and stifling, especially for Mr. Golyadkin, who could hardly breathe as it was. His greatcoat, soaked and heavy with wet, sent a sort of unpleasant warm dampness all through him and weighed down his exhausted legs. A feverish shiver sent sharp, shooting pains all over him; he was in a painful cold sweat of exhaustion, so much so that Mr. Golyadkin even forgot to repeat at every suitable occasion with his characteristic firmness and resolution his favourite phrase that "it all, maybe, most likely, indeed, might turn out for the best." "But all this does not matter for the time," our hero repeated, still staunch and not downhearted, wiping from his face the cold drops that streamed in all directions from the brim of his round hat, which was so soaked that it could hold no more water. Adding that all this was nothing so far, our hero tried to sit on a rather thick clump of wood, which was lying near a heap of logs in Olsufy Ivanovitch's yard. Of course, it was no good thinking of Spanish serenades or silken ladders, but it was quite necessary to think of a modest corner, snug and private, if not altogether warm. He felt greatly tempted, we may mention in passing, by that corner in the back entry of Olsufy Ivanovitch's flat in which he had once, almost at the beginning of this true story, stood for two hours between a cupboard and an old screen among all sorts of domestic odds and ends and useless litter. The fact is that Mr. Golyadkin had been standing waiting for two whole hours on this occasion in Olsufy Ivanovitch's yard. But in regard to that modest and snug little corner there were certain drawbacks which had not existed before. The first drawback was the fact that it was probably now a marked place and that certain precautionary measures had been taken in regard to it since the scandal at Olsufy Ivanovitch's last ball. Secondly, he had to wait for a signal from Klara Olsufyevna, for there was bound to be some such signal, it was always a feature in such cases and, "it didn't begin with us and it won't end with us."

At this point Mr. Golyadkin very appropriately remembered a novel he had read long ago in which the heroine, in precisely similar circumstances, signalled to Alfred by tying a pink ribbon to her window. But now, at night, in the climate of Petersburg, famous for its dampness and unreliability, a pink ribbon was hardly appropriate and, in fact, was utterly out of the question.

"No, it's not a matter of silk ladders," thought our hero, "and I had better stay here quietly and comfortably . . . I had better stand here."

And he selected a place in the yard exactly opposite the window, near a stack of firewood. Of course, many persons, grooms and coachmen, were continually crossing the yard, and there was, besides, the rumbling of wheels and the snorting of horses and so on; yet it was a convenient place, whether he was observed or not; but now, anyway, there was the advantage of being to some extent in the shadow, and no one could see Mr. Golyadkin while he himself could see everything.

The windows were brightly lit up, there was some sort of ceremonious party at Olsufy Ivanovitch's. But he could hear no music as yet.

"So it's not a ball, but a party of some other sort," thought our hero, somewhat aghast. "Is it today?" floated the doubt through him. "Have I made a mistake in the date? Perhaps; anything is possible. . . . Yes, to be sure, anything is possible . . . Perhaps she wrote a letter to me yesterday, and it didn't reach me, and perhaps it did not reach me because Petrushka put his spoke in, the rascal! Or it was tomorrow, that is — wait with a carriage . . ."

At this point our hero turned cold all over and felt in his pocket for the letter, to make sure. But to his surprise the letter was not in his pocket.

"How's this?" muttered Mr. Golyadkin, more dead than alive. "Where did I leave it? Then I must have lost it. That is the last straw!" he moaned at last. "Oh, if it falls into evil hands! Perhaps it has already. Good Lord! What may it not lead to! It may lead to something such that . . . Ach, my miserable fate!" At this point Mr. Golyadkin began trembling like a leaf at the thought that perhaps his vicious twin had thrown the greatcoat at him with the object of stealing the letter of which he had somehow got an inkling from Mr. Golyadkin's enemies.

"What's more, he's stealing it," thought our hero, "as evidence . . . but why evidence! . . ."

After the first shock of horror, the blood rushed to Mr. Golyadkin's head. Moaning and gnashing his teeth, he clutched his burning head, sank back on his block of wood and relapsed into brooding. . . . But he could form no coherent thought. Figures kept flitting through his brain, incidents came back to his memory, now vaguely, now very distinctly, the tunes of some foolish songs kept ringing in his ears. . . . He was in great distress, unnatural distress!

"My God, my God!" our hero thought, recovering himself a little, and suppressing a muffled sob, "give me fortitude in the immensity of my afflictions! That I am done for, utterly destroyed — of that there can be no doubt, and that's all in the natural order of things, since it cannot be otherwise. To begin with, I've lost my berth, I've certainly lost it, I must have lost it . . . Well, supposing things are set right somehow. Supposing I have money enough to begin with: I must have another lodging, furniture of some sort. . . . In the first place, I shan't have Petrushka. I can get on without the rascal . . . somehow, with help from the people of the house; well, that will be all right! I can go in and out when I like, and Petrushka won't grumble at my coming in late — yes, that is so; that's why it's a good thing to have the people in the house. . . . Well, supposing that's all right; but all that's nothing to do with it."

At this point the thought of the real position again dawned upon Mr. Golyadkin's memory. He looked round.

"Oh, Lord, have mercy on me, have mercy on me! What am I talking about?" he thought, growing utterly desperate and clutching his burning head in his hands . . . .

"Won't you soon be going, sir?" a voice pronounced above Mr. Golyadkin. Our hero started; before him stood his cabman, who was also drenched through and shivering; growing impatient, and having nothing to do, he had thought fit to take a look at Mr. Golyadkin behind the woodstack.

"I am all right, my friend . . . I am coming soon, soon, very soon; you wait . . ."

The cabman walked away, grumbling to himself. "What is he grumbling about?" Mr. Golyadkin wondered through his tears. "Why, I have hired him for the evening, why, I'm . . . within my rights now . . . that's so! I've hired him for the evening and that's the end of it. If one stands still, it's just the same. That's for me to decide. I am free to drive on or not to drive on. And my staying here by the woodstack has nothing to do with the case . . . and don't dare to say anything; think, the gentleman wants to stand behind the woodstack, and so he's standing behind it . . . and he is not disgracing any one's honour! That's the fact of the matter.

"I tell you what is it is, madam, if you care to know. Nowadays, madam, nobody lives in a hut, or anything of that sort. No, indeed. And in our industrial age there's no getting on without morality, a

fact of which you are a fatal example, madam . . . You say we must get a job as a register clerk and live in a hut on the sea-shore. In the first place, madam, there are no register clerks on the sea-shore, and in the second place we can't get a job as a register clerk. For supposing, for example, I send in a petition, present myself — saying a register clerk's place or something of the sort . . . and defend me from my enemy . . . they'll tell you, madam, they'll say, to be sure . . . we've lots of register clerks, and here you are not at Madame Falbalas', where you learnt the rules of good behaviour of which you are a fatal example. Good behaviour, madam, means staying at home, honouring your father and not thinking about suitors prematurely. Suitors will come in good time, madam, that's so! Of course, you are bound to have some accomplishments, such as playing the piano sometimes, speaking French, history, geography, scripture and arithmetic, that's the truth of it! And that's all you need. Cooking, too, cooking certainly forms part of the education of a well-behaved girl! But as it is, in the first place, my fine lady, they won't let you go, they'll raise a hue and cry after you, and then they'll lock you up in a nunnery. How will it be then, madam? What will you have me do then? Would you have me, madam, follow the example of some stupid novels, and melt into tears on a neighbouring hillock, gazing at the cold walls of your prison house, and finally die, following the example of some wretched German poets and novelists. Is that it, madam? But, to begin with, allow me to tell you, as a friend, that things are not done like that, and in the second place I would have given you and your parents, too, a good thrashing for letting you read French books; for French books teach you no good. There's a poison in them . . . a pernicious poison, madam! Or do you imagine, allow me to ask you, or do you imagine that we shall elope with impunity, or something of that sort . . . that we shall have a hut on the shore of the sea and so on; and that we shall begin billing and cooing and talking about our feelings, and that so we shall spend our lives in happiness and content; and then there would be little ones — so then we shall . . . shall go to our father, the civil councillor, Olsufy Ivanovitch, and say, 'we've got a little one, and so, on this propitious occasion remove your curse, and bless the couple.' No, madam, I tell you again, that's not the way to do things, and for the first thing there'll be no billing and cooing and please don't reckon on it. Nowadays, madam, the husband is the master and a good, well-brought-up wife should try and please him in every way. And endearments, madam, are not in favour, nowadays, in our industrial age; the day of Jean Jacques Rousseau is over. The husband comes home, for instance, hungry from the office, and asks, 'Isn't there something to eat, my love, a drop of vodka to drink, a bit of salt fish to eat?' So then, madam, you must have the vodka and the herring ready. Your husband will eat it with relish, and he won't so much as look at you, he'll only say 'Run into the kitchen, kitten,' he'll say, 'and look after the dinner, and at most, once a week, he'll kiss you, even then rather indifferently . . . That's how it will be with us, my young lady! Yes, even then indifferently. . . . That's how it will be, if one considers it, if it has come to one's looking at the thing in that way. . . . And how do I come in? Why have you mixed me up in your caprices? 'The noble man who is suffering for your sake and will be dear to your heart for ever,' and so on. but in the first place, madam, I am not suited to you, you know yourself, I'm not a great hand at compliments, I'm not fond of uttering perfumed trifles for the ladies. I'm not fond of lady-killers, and I must own I've never been a beauty to look at. You won't find any swagger or false shame in me, and I tell you so now in all sincerity. This is the fact of the matter: we can boast of nothing but a straightforward, open character and common sense; we have nothing to do with intrigues. I am not one to intrigue, I say so and I'm proud of it — that's the fact of the matter! . . . I wear no mask among straightforward people, and to tell you the whole truth . . ."

Suddenly Mr. Golyadkin started. The red and perfectly sopping beard of the cabman appeared round the woodstack again . . .

"I am coming directly, my friend. I'm coming at once, you know," Mr. Golyadkin responded in a trembling and failing voice.

The cabman scratched his head, then stroked his beard, and moved a step forward . . . stood still and looked suspiciously at Mr. Golyadkin.

"I am coming directly, my friend; you see, my friend . . . I . . . just a little, you see, only a second! . . . more . . . here, you see, my friend . . ."

"Aren't you coming at all?" the cabman asked at last, definitely coming up to Mr. Golyadkin.

"No, my friend, I'm coming directly. I am waiting, you see, my friend . . ."

"So I see . . ."

"You see, my friend, I . . . What part of the country do you come from, my friend?"

"We are under a master . . ."

"And have you a good master? . . ."

"All right . . ."

"Yes, my friend; you stay here, my friend, you see . . . Have you been in Petersburg long, my friend?"

"It's a year since I came . . ."

"And are you getting on all right, my friend?"

"Middling."

"To be sure, my friend, to be sure. You must thank Providence, my friend. You must look out for straightforward people. Straightforward people are none too common nowadays, my friend; he would give you washing, food, and drink, my good fellow, a good man would. But sometimes you see tears shed for the sake of gold, my friend . . . you see a lamentable example; that's the fact of the matter, my friend . . ."

The cabman seemed to feel sorry for Mr. Golyadkin. "Well, your honour, I'll wait. Will your honour be waiting long?"

"No, my friend, no; I . . . you know . . . I won't wait any longer, my good man . . . What do you think, my friend? I rely upon you. I won't stay any longer."

"Aren't you going at all?"

"No, my friend, no; I'll reward you, my friend . . . that's the fact of the matter. How much ought I to give you, my dear fellow?"

"What you hired me for, please, sir. I've been waiting here a long time; don't be hard on a man, sir."

"Well, here, my good man, here."

At this point Mr. Golyadkin gave six roubles to the cabman, and made up his mind in earnest to waste no more time, that is, to clear off straight away, especially as the cabman was dismissed and everything was over, and so it was useless to wait longer. He rushed out of the yard, went out of the gate, turned to the left and without looking round took to his heels, breathless and rejoicing. "Perhaps it will all be for

the best," he thought, "and perhaps in this way I've run away from trouble." Mr. Golyadkin suddenly became all at once light-hearted. "Oh, if only it could turn out for the best!" thought our hero, though he put little faith in his own words. "I know what I'll do . . ." he thought. "No, I know, I'd better try the other tack . . . Or wouldn't it be better to do this? . . ." In this way, hesitating and seeking for the solution of his doubts, our hero ran to Semyonovsky Bridge; but while running to Semyonovsky Bridge he very rationally and conclusively decided to return.

"It will be better so," he thought. "I had better try the other tack, that is . . . I will just go — I'll look on simply as an outsider, an outsider — and nothing more, whatever happens — it's not my fault, that's the fact of the matter! That's how it shall be now."

Deciding to return, our hero actually did return, the more readily because with this happy thought he conceived of himself now as quite an outsider.

"It's the best thing; one's not responsible for anything, and one will see all that's necessary . . . that's the fact of the matter!"

It was a safe plan and that settled it. Reassured, he crept back under the peaceful shelter of his soothing and protecting woodstack, and began gazing intently at the window. This time he was not destined to gaze and wait long. Suddenly a strange commotion became apparent at all the windows. Figures appeared, curtains were drawn back, whole groups of people were crowding to the windows at Olsufy Ivanovitch's flat. All were peeping out looking for something in the yard. From the security of his woodstack, our hero, too, began with curiosity watching the general commotion, and with interest craned forward to right and to left so far as he could within the shadow of the woodstack. Suddenly he started, held his breath and almost sat down with horror. It seemed to him — in short, he realized, that they were looking for nothing and for nobody but him, Mr. Golyadkin! Every one was looking in his direction. It was impossible to escape; they saw him . . . In a flutter, Mr. Golyadkin huddled as closely as he could to the woodstack, and only then noticed that the treacherous shadow had betrayed him, that it did not cover him completely. Our hero would have been delighted at that moment to creep into a mouse-hole in the woodstack, and there meekly to remain, if only it had been possible. But it was absolutely impossible. In his agony he began at last staring openly and boldly at the windows, it was the best thing to do. . . . And suddenly he glowed with shame. He had been fully discovered, every one was staring at him at once, they were all waving their hands, all were nodding their heads at him, all were calling to him; then several windows creaked as they opened, several voices shouted something to him at once . . . .

"I wonder why they don't whip these naughty girls as children," our hero muttered to himself, losing his head completely. Suddenly there ran <--? --> down the steps he (we know who), without his hat or greatcoat, breathless, rubbing his hands, wriggling, capering, perfidiously displaying intense joy at seeing Mr. Golyadkin.

"Yakov Petrovitch," whispered this individual, so notorious for his worthlessness, "Yakov Petrovitch, are you here? You'll catch cold. It's chilly here, Yakov Petrovitch. Come indoors."

"Yakov Petrovitch! No, I'm all right, Yakov Petrovitch," our hero muttered in a submissive voice.

"No, this won't do, Yakov Petrovitch, I beg you, I humbly beg you to wait with us. 'Make him welcome and bring him in,' they say, 'Yakov Petrovitch.'"

"No, Yakov Petrovitch, you see, I'd better . . . I had better go home, Yakov Petrovitch . . ." said our hero, burning at a slow fire and freezing at the same time with shame and terror.

"No — no — no — no!" whispered the loathsome person. "No — no — no, on no account! Come along," he said resolutely, and he dragged Mr. Golyadkin senior to the steps. Mr. Golyadkin senior did not at all want to go, but as every one was looking at them, it would have been stupid to struggle and resist; so our hero went — though, indeed, one cannot say that he went, because he did not know in the least what was being done with him. Though, after all, it made no difference!

Before our hero had time to recover himself and come to his senses, he found himself in the drawing-room. He was pale, dishevelled, harassed; with lustreless eyes he scanned the crowd — horror! The drawing-room, all the rooms — were full to overflowing. There were masses of people, a whole galaxy of ladies; and all were crowding round Mr. Golyadkin and he perceived clearly that they were all forcing him in one direction.

"Not towards the door," was the thought that floated through Mr. Golyadkin's mind.

They were, in fact, forcing him not towards the door but Olsufy Ivanovitch's easy chair. On one side of the armchair stood Klara Olsufyevna, pale, languid, melancholy, but gorgeously dressed. Mr. Golyadkin was particularly struck by a little white flower which rested on her superb hair. On the other side of the armchair stood Vladimir Semyonovitch, clad in black, with his new order in his buttonhole. Mr. Golyadkin was led in, as we have described above, straight up to Olsufy Ivanovitch — on one side of him Mr. Golyadkin junior, who had assumed an air of great decorum and propriety, to the immense relief of our hero, while on the other side was Andrey Filippovitch, with a very solemn expression on his face.

"What can it mean?" Mr. Golyadkin wondered.

When he saw that he was being led to Olsufy Ivanovitch, an idea struck him like a flash of lightning. The thought of the intercepted letter darted through his brain. In great agony our hero stood before Olsufy Ivanovitch's chair.

"What will he say now?" he wondered to himself. "Of course, it will be all aboveboard now, that is, straightforward and, one may say, honourable; I shall say this is how it is, and so on."

But what our hero apparently feared did not happen. Olsufy Ivanovitch received Mr. Golyadkin very warmly, and though he did not hold out his hand to him, yet as he gazed at our hero, he shook his grey and venerable head — shook it with an air of solemn melancholy and yet of goodwill. So, at least, it seemed to Mr. Golyadkin. He even fancied that a tear glittered in Olsufy Ivanovitch's lustreless eyes; he raised his eyes and saw that there seemed to be tears, too, on the eyelashes of Klara Olsufyevna, who was standing by — that there seemed to be something of the same sort even in the eyes of Vladimir Semyonovitch — that the unruffled and composed dignity of Andrey Filippovitch has the same significance as the general tearful sympathy — that even the young man who was so much like a civil councillor, seizing the opportunity, was sobbing bitterly. . . . Though perhaps this was only all Mr. Golyadkin's fancy, because he was so much moved himself, and distinctly felt the hot tears running down his cheeks . . . .

Feeling reconciled with mankind and his destiny, and filled with love at the moment, not only for Olsufy Ivanovitch, not only for the whole part collected there, but even for his noxious twin (who seemed now to be by no means noxious, and not even to be his twin at all, but a person very agreeable

in himself and in no way connected with him), our hero, in a voice broken with sobs, tried to express his feelings to Olsufy Ivanovitch, but was too much overcome by all that he had gone through, and could not utter a word; he could only, with an expressive gesture, point meekly to his heart. . .

At last, probably to spare the feelings of the old man, Andrey Filippovitch led Mr. Golyadkin a little away, though he seemed to leave him free to do as he liked. Smiling, muttering something to himself, somewhat bewildered, yet almost completely reconciled with fate and his fellow creatures, our hero began to make his way through the crowd of guests. Every one made way for him, every one looked at him with strange curiosity and with mysterious, unaccountable sympathy. Our hero went into another room; he met with the same attention everywhere; he was vaguely conscious of the whole crowd closely following him, noting every step he took, talking in undertones among themselves of something very interesting, shaking their heads, arguing and discussing in whispers. Mr. Golyadkin wanted very much to know what they were discussing in whispers. Looking round, he saw near him Mr. Golyadkin junior. Feeling an overwhelming impulse to seize his hand and draw him aside, Mr. Golyadkin begged the other Yakov Petrovitch most particularly to co-operate with him in all his future undertakings, and not to abandon him at a critical moment. Mr. Golyadkin junior nodded his head gravely and warmly pressed the hand of Mr. Golyadkin senior. Our hero's heart was quivering with the intensity of his emotion. He was gasping for breath, however; he felt so oppressed — so oppressed; he felt that all those eyes fastened upon him were oppressing and dominating him . . . Mr. Golyadkin caught a glimpse of the councillor who wore a wig. The latter was looking at him with a stern, searching eye, not in the least softened by the general sympathy . . .

Our hero made up his mind to go straight up to him in order to smile at him and have an immediate explanation, but this somehow did not come off. For one instant Mr. Golyadkin became almost unconscious, almost lost all memory, all feeling.

When he came to himself again he noticed that he was the centre of a large ring formed by the rest of the party round him. Suddenly Mr. Golyadkin's name was called from the other room; noise and excitement, all rushed to the door of the first room, almost carrying our hero along with them. In the crush the hard-hearted councillor in the wig was side by side with Mr. Golyadkin, and, taking our hero by the hand, he made him sit down opposite Olsufy Ivanovitch, at some distance from the latter, however. Every one in the room sat down; the guests were arranged in rows round Mr. Golyadkin and Olsufy Ivanovitch. Everything was hushed; every one preserved a solemn silence; every one was watching Olsufy Ivanovitch, evidently expecting something out of the ordinary. Mr. Golyadkin noticed that beside Olsufy Ivanovitch's chair and directly facing the councillor sat Mr. Golyadkin junior, with Andrey Filippovitch. The silence was prolonged; they were evidently expecting something.

"Just as it is in a family when some one is setting off on a far journey. We've only to stand up and pray now," thought our hero.

Suddenly there was a general stir which interrupted Mr. Golyadkin's reflections. Something they had been waiting for happened.

"He is coming, he is coming!" passed from one to another in the crowd.

"Who is it that is coming?" floated through Mr. Golyadkin's mind, and he shuddered at a strange sensation. "High time too!" said the councillor, looking intently at Andrey Ivanovitch. Andrey Filippovitch, for his part, glanced at Olsufy Ivanovitch. Olsufy Ivanovitch gravely and solemnly nodded his head.



"Let us stand up," said the councillor, and he made Mr. Golyadkin get up. All rose to their feet. Then the councillor took Mr. Golyadkin senior by the hand, and Andrey Filippovitch took Mr. Golyadkin junior, and in this way these two precisely similar persons were conducted through the expectant crowd surrounding them. Our hero looked about him in perplexity; but he was at once checked and his attention was called to Mr. Golyadkin junior, who was holding out his hand to him.

"They want to reconcile us," thought our hero, and with emotion he held out his hand to Mr. Golyadkin junior; and then — then bent his head forward towards him. The other Mr. Golyadkin did the same . . . .

At this point it seemed to Mr. Golyadkin senior that his perfidious friend was smiling, that he gave a sly, hurried wink to the crowd of onlookers, and that there was something sinister in the face of the worthless Mr. Golyadkin junior, that he even made a grimace at the moment of his Judas kiss . . . .

There was a ringing in Mr. Golyadkin's ears, and a darkness before his eyes; it seemed to him that an infinite multitude, an unending series of precisely similar Golyadkins were noisily bursting in at every door of the room; but it was too late. . . . the resounding, treacherous kiss was over, and . . .

Then quite an unexpected event occurred. . . . The door opened noisily, and in the doorway stood a man, the very sight of whom sent a chill to Mr. Golyadkin's heart. He stood rooted to the spot. A cry of horror died away in his choking throat. Yet Mr. Golyadkin knew it all beforehand, and had had a presentiment of something of the sort for a long time. The new arrival went up to Mr. Golyadkin gravely and solemnly. Mr. Golyadkin knew this personage very well. He had seen him before, had seen him very often, had seen him that day . . . This personage was a tall, thick-set man in a black dress-coat with a good-sized cross on his breast, and was possessed of thick, very black whiskers; nothing was lacking but the cigar in the mouth to complete the picture. Yet this person's eyes, as we have mentioned already, sent a chill to the heart of Mr. Golyadkin. With a grave and solemn air this terrible man approached the pitiable hero of our story. . . . Our hero held out his hand to him; the stranger took his hand and drew him along with him . . . With a crushed and desperate air our hero looked about him.

"It's . . . it's Krestyan Ivanovitch Rutenspitz, doctor of medicine and surgery; your old acquaintance, Yakov Petrovitch!" a detestable voice whispered in Mr. Golyadkin's ear. He looked around: it was Mr. Golyadkin's twin, so revolting in the despicable meanness of his soul. A malicious, indecent joy shone in his countenance; he was rubbing his hands with rapture, he was turning his head from side to side in ecstasy, he was fawning round every one in delight and seemed ready to dance with glee. At last he pranced forward, took a candle from one of the servants and walked in front, showing the way to Mr. Golyadkin and Krestyan Ivanovitch. Mr. Golyadkin heard the whole party in the drawing-room rush after him, crowding and squeezing one another, and all beginning to repeat after Mr. Golyadkin himself, "It is all right, don't be afraid, Yakov Petrovitch; this is your old friend and acquaintance, you know, Krestyan Ivanovitch Rutenspitz. . ."

At last they came out on the brightly lighted stairs; there was a crowd of people on the stairs too. The front door was thrown open noisily, and Mr. Golyadkin found himself on the steps, together with Krestyan Ivanovitch. At the entrance stood a carriage with four horses that were snorting with impatience. The malignant Mr. Golyadkin junior in three bounds flew down the stair and opened the carriage door himself. Krestyan Ivanovitch, with an impressive gesture, asked Mr. Golyadkin to get in. There was no need of the impressive gesture, however; there were plenty of people to help him in. . . . Faint with horror, Mr. Golyadkin looked back. The whole of the brightly lighted staircase was crowded with people; inquisitive eyes were looking at him from all sides; Olsufy Ivanovitch himself was sitting in his easy chair on the top landing, and watching all that took place with deep interest. Every one was waiting. A murmur of impatience passed through the crowd when Mr. Golyadkin looked back.

"I hope I have done nothing . . . nothing reprehensible . . . or that can call for severity . . . and general attention in regard to my official relations," our hero brought out in desperation. A clamour of talk rose all round him, all were shaking their head, tears started from Mr. Golyadkin's eyes.

"In that case I'm ready . . . I have full confidence . . . and I entrust my fate to Krestyan Ivanovitch . . ."

No sooner had Mr. Golyadkin declared that he entrusted his fate to Krestyan Ivanovitch than a dreadful, deafening shout of joy came from all surrounding him and was repeated in a sinister echo through the whole of the waiting crowd. Then Krestyan Ivanovitch on one side and Andrey Filippovitch on the other helped Mr. Golyadkin into the carriage; his double, in his usual nasty way, was helping to get him in from behind. The unhappy Mr. Golyadkin senior took his last look on all and everything, and, shivering like a kitten that has been drenched with cold water — if the comparison may be permitted — got into the carriage. Krestyan Ivanovitch followed him immediately. The carriage door slammed. There was a swish of the whip on the horses' backs . . . the horses started off. . . . The crowd dashed after Mr. Golyadkin. The shrill, furious shouts of his enemies pursued him by way of good wishes for his journey. For some time several persons were still running by the carriage that bore away Mr. Golyadkin; but by degrees they were left behind, till at last they all disappeared. Mr. Golyadkin's unworthy twin kept up longer than any one. With his hands in the trouser pockets of his green uniform he ran on with a satisfied air, skipping first to one and then to the other side of the carriage, sometimes catching hold of the window-frame and hanging on by it, poking his head in at the window, and throwing farewell kisses to Mr. Golyadkin. But he began to get tired, he was less and less often to be seen, and at last vanished altogether. There was a dull ache in Mr. Golyadkin's heart; a hot rush of blood set Mr. Golyadkin's head throbbing; he felt stifled, he longed to unbutton himself — to bare his breast, to cover it with snow and pour cold water on it. He sank at last into forgetfulness . . .

When he came to himself, he saw that the horses were taking him along an unfamiliar road. There were dark patches of copse on each side of it; it was desolate and deserted. Suddenly he almost swooned; two fiery eyes were staring at him in the darkness, and those two eyes were glittering with malignant, hellish glee. "That's not Krestyan Ivanovitch! Who is it? Or is it he? It is. It is Krestyan Ivanovitch, but not the old Krestyan Ivanovitch, it's another Krestyan Ivanovitch! It's a terrible Krestyan Ivanovitch!" . . .

"Krestyan Ivanovitch, I . . . I believe . . . I'm all right, Krestyan Ivanovitch," our hero was beginning timidly in a trembling voice, hoping by his meekness and submission to soften the terrible Krestyan Ivanovitch a little.

"You get free quarters, wood, with light, and service, the which you deserve not," Krestyan Ivanovitch's answer rang out, stern and terrible as a judge's sentence.

Our hero shrieked and clutched his head in his hands. Alas! For a long while he had been haunted by a presentiment of this.

## William Wilson

### [fragmenten]

Edgar Allen Poe, *Alle verhalen*, Athenaeum – Polak & Van Gennep, Amsterdam, 2007; vertaald door Paul Syrier; p.223-242: *William Wilson*.

p. 228:

Vast stond echter dat als we wél broers waren geweest, we tweelingbroers geweest hadden moeten zijn, want nadat ik afscheid van dr. Bransby had genomen hoorde ik bij toeval dat mijn naamgenoot op de negentiende januari 1813 was geboren, en dat is een enigszins opmerkelijk toeval, want het is precies de dag van mijn geboorte.

p. 229-231:

Ik had altijd een aversie gevoeld jegens mijn weinig hoogstaande familienaam en mijn heel alledaagse, zo niet plebejische voornaam. De woorden waren gif in mijn oren, en toen er op de dag van mijn aankomst nog een William Wilson zijn opwachting maakte op de academie voelde ik woede jegens hem omdat hij deze naam droeg en verdubbelde zich mijn weerzin tegen de naam omdat hij gedragen werd door een onbekende, die er de oorzaak van zou zijn dat hij voortdurend tweemaal zou worden genoemd, die voortdurend in mijn tegenwoordigheid zou verkeren en wiens bezigheden in het alledaagse bedrijf van de school vanwege dit afstotelijke toeval onvermijdelijk met de mijne zouden worden verward.

Het gevoel van gekwetsdheid dat zodoende werd opgeroepen, werd sterker bij iedere gebeurtenis waaruit een overeenkomst, moreel of fysiek, tussen mijn rivaal en mij bleek. Ik had toen nog niet het opmerkelijke feit ontdekt dat we dezelfde leeftijd hadden, maar ik zag wel dat we even lang waren en merkte op dat we wat algemene persoonlijke trekken en uiterlijk betraf zelfs wonderbaarlijk op elkaar leken. Ik nam ook hevig aanstoot aan het gerucht over een familiebetrekking dat in de hogere klassen de ronde was gaan doen. Kort gezegd: niets kon me ernstiger storen (hoewel ik een dergelijke ergernis zorgvuldig verborg) dan enige toespeling op de mogelijkheid dat er tussen ons van een geestelijke, persoonlijke of lichamelijke gelijkenis sprake zou zijn. In werkelijkheid had ik echter geen reden te geloven (met uitzondering van de kwestie van de familieband en in het geval van Wilson zelf) dat deze gelijkenis ooit een onderwerp van commentaar van onze medescholieren was geweest, of zelfs maar was opgemerkt. Dat hij die in al zijn draagwijdte opmerkte, en even scherp als ik, was duidelijk, maar dat hij in dergelijke omstandigheden een zo vruchtbare grond voor het veroorzaken van ergernis vond, kan, zoals ik al eerder heb gezegd, alleen aan zijn meer dan gewoon doordringende blik worden toegeschreven.

Zijn oogmerk (een volmaakte imitatie van mezelf te zijn) kreeg zowel in woorden als in gebaren zijn beslag, en zeer bewonderenswaardig speelde hij zijn rol. Het was gemakkelijk mijn kleding te kopiëren; mijn wijze van lopen en mijn gedrag in het algemeen maakte hij zich moeiteloos eigen; in weerwil van zijn lichamelijke handicap onstnapte zelfs mijn stem hem niet. Aan hardere volumes waagde hij zich natuurlijk niet, maar wat toon betreft was het geluid identiek, *en zijn merkwaaardige gefluister werd de precieze echo van het mijne*.

Hoe verschrikkelijk deze schitterende portrettering me ergerde (want de aanduiding karikatuur zou niet terecht zijn) zal ik nu niet proberen te beschrijven. Ik had maar één troost: het feit dat de imitatie kennelijk alleen door mij werd opgemerkt en dat alleen ik de veelbetekenende en vreemd sarcastische glimlachjes van mijn naamgenoot hoefde te verdragen. Tevreden dat hij in mijn gemoed het beoogde effect had gesorteerd leek hij heimelijk te grinniken om de steek die hij had toegebracht en ging in de regel achteloos voorbij aan het applaus dat het slagen van zijn gevatte pogingen het publiek zo gemakkelijk had kunnen ontlokken. Dat de school zijn opzet niet eens aanvoelde, niet zag dat deze slaagde en niet meedeed aan zijn spotternijen, was vele angstige maanden lang een raadsel dat ik niet kon oplossen. Misschien was zijn imitatie niet zo goed zichtbaar omdat ze zo *geleidelijk* groeide, of, wat waarschijnlijker is, dankte ik mijn veiligheid aan het meesterlijke optreden van de imitator, die de letter liet voor wat hij was (wat op een schilderij alles is wat domme mensen kunnen zien) en me slechts de volledige geest van zijn origineel gaf, zodat ik er in mijn eentje over kon nadenken en onder kon lijden.

Ik heb het al meer dan eens gehad over de weezinwekkende, neerbuigende houding die hij tegenover me aannam en over zijn regelmatige bemoeizieke obstructie van wat ik wilde. Deze obstructie nam dikwijls de onelegante gedaante van een advies aan, een advies dat hij niet openlijk gaf maar suggereerde of liet doorschemeren. Ik nam het in ontvangst met een weezin die groeide naarmate ik ouder werd. Laat me hem echter toch, op deze dag, zoveel later, het simpele recht doen te erkennen dat ik me geen enkele gelegenheid kan herinneren waarbij de suggesties van mijn rivaal tot de dwalingen of dwaasheden neigden die zo gebruikelijk waren voor zijn onrijpe leeftijd en ogenschijnlijke gebrek aan ervaring; dat in elk geval zijn morele gevoel, zo niet zijn algemene talent en wereldse wijsheid, veel scherper ontwikkeld was dan het mijne en dat ik tegenwoordig een beter en dus gelukkiger mens was geweest als ik minder vaak de adviezen in de wind had geslagen die belichaamd werden door dat veelbetekenende gefluister dat ik toen maar al te diep haatte en al te bitter verwenste.

De waarheid was dat ik onder zijn weezinwekkende supervisie uiterst onrustig werd en dagelijks een grotere hekel kreeg aan wat ik als zijn ondraaglijke arrogantie beschouwde. Ik heb gezegd dat mijn gevoelens jegens hem tijdens de eerste jaren van onze contacten als medeleerlingen gemakkelijk tot vriendschap hadden kunnen rijpen maar dat mijn gevoelens gedurende de laatste maanden van mijn verblijf aan de academie, hoewel zijn opdringerige dagelijkse manier van doen ongetwijfeld tot op zekere hoogte was afgenomen, vrijwel evenredig bijna de gedaante van regelrechte haat aannamen. Bij een gelegenheid zag hij dat, denk ik, en sindsdien meed hij me, of maakte er een hele vertoning van me te mijden.

p. 240-242:

Tot dusverre had ik me gedwee aan zijn gebiedende overheersing onderworpen. Het gevoel van diep ontzag waarmee ik gewoonlijk het verheven karakter, de verheven wijsheid, de ogenschijnlijke alomtegenwoordigheid en almacht van Wilson bezag, gevoegd bij een gevoel van angst waarvan bepaalde andere trekken van zijn aard en aanmatiging me vervulden, hadden me tot dusverre van een notie van mijn eigen algehele zwakte en hulpeloosheid doordrongen en me een stilzwijgende, zij het bitter weerspannige onderwerping aan zijn arbitraire wil ingegeven. De laatste tijd had ik mezelf echter geheel aan de wijn overgeleverd, en door de krankzinnig makende invloed hiervan op mijn erfelijke temperament kon ik gezag steeds minder verduren. Ik begon te morren, te aarzelen, me te verzetten. En was het alleen maar mijn fantasie die me deed geloven dat naarmate mijn eigen kracht toenam, die van mijn kwelgeest een evenredige vermindering onderging? Hoe het ook zij, ik begon nu de inspiratie van

een brandende hoop te voelen en koesterde ten slotte in mijn geheime gedachten een ongenaakbare en desperate vastbeslotenheid: ik zou me niet langer aan een staat van slavernij onderwerpen.

In Rome woonde ik, tijdens het carnaval van 18.., in het palazzo van de Napolitaanse hertog Di Broglio een gemaskerd bal bij. Ik had me vrijelijker dan gewoonlijk aan de excessen van de wijntafel overgegeven, en nu hinderde de verstikkende sfeer in de volle vertrekken me meer dan ik kon verdragen. Ook de moeite die het me kostte me een weg te banen door de dichte drommen van het publiek droeg niet weinig bij aan de verslechtering van mijn stemming, want ik zocht gespannen (laat me niet zeggen met welk onwaardig motief) naar de jonge, de vrolijke, de mooie vrouw van de bejaarde en seniele Di Broglio. Met een al te weinig scrupuleus vertrouwen had ze me eerder al het geheim verklapt in welk kostuum ze gekleed zou gaan en nu, nu ik een glimp van haar had opgevangen, probeerde ik haastig in haar buurt te komen. Op dat moment voelde ik een lichte hand op mijn schouder en hoorde ik dat eeuwig herinnerde, lage, verdoemde *gefluister* in mijn oor.

Volkomen dol van woede draaide ik me meteen om naar degene die me zo had gestoord en greep hem heftig bij zijn boord. Hij was, zoals ik had verwacht, gekleed in een kostuum dat volkomen identiek was aan het mijne: een Spaanse mantel van blauw fluweel, rond het middel omgord met een karmozijnen gordel waaraan een rapier hing. Een masker van zwarte zijde bedekte zijn gezicht geheel.

'Schooier!' zei ik met een stem die hees was van woede, terwijl iedere lettergreep die ik uitsprak mijn razernij nieuwe brandstof leek te geven, 'schooier! Vervloekte schurk! Je zult me... je zúlt me niet tot mijn dood achtervolgen! Kom mee, of ik steek je hier ter plekke overhoop!' En ik wrong me door de menigte van de balzaal naar een klein aangrenzend voorvertrek – en sleurde hem mee op mijn weg, waarbij hij geen verzet bood.

Nadat we de kamer hadden betreden, stootte ik hem razend van me af. Hij botste wankelend tegen de muur terwijl ik met een vloek de deur sloot en hem gelastte zijn wapen te trekken. Hij aarzelde slechts even, trok toen met een lichte zucht zwijgend zijn rapier en stelde zich in verdedigende houding op.

De strijd duurde maar heel kort. Ik was geladen door alle denkbare wilde drift en voelde in mijn ene arm de energie en kracht van een hele menigte. In enkele seconden dwong ik hem door pure kracht tegen de lambrisering en stootte, nu hij aan mijn genade was overgeleverd, mijn rapier met bruut geweld herhaaldelijk in zijn borst.

Op dat moment probeerde er iemand de klink van de deur om te draaien. Gejaagd voorkwam ik dat hij of zij binnenkwam en draaide me onmiddellijk weer om naar mijn stervende tegenstander. Maar welke menselijke taal kan een adequaat beeld geven van díé verbazing, van dát afgrijzen waardoor ik werd aangegrepen bij het zien van het schouwspel dat zich toen aan me voordeed? Het korte moment waarin ik mijn blik had afgewend had kennelijk volstaan om een materiële verandering in de inrichting van de overzijde van het vertrek te bewerkstelligen. Een grote spiegel, zo scheen het me aanvankelijk in mijn verwarring toe, stond nu waar er daarvoor geen zichtbaar was geweest, en terwijl ik er in de greep van uiterst afgrijzen heen liep kwam mijn eigen evenbeeld, maar dan met een lijkleek en bloedbevlekt gezicht, met zwakke en wankelende stappen mijn kant op.

Zo leek het, zeg ik, maar zo was het niet. Het was mijn tegenstander, het was Wilson, die in de laatste stuiptrekkingen van zijn verscheiden tegenover me stond. Zijn masker en mantel lagen waar hij ze had

neergegoid, op de vloer. Geen draad in zijn hele kledij, geen groef in de geprononceerde en markante trekken van zijn gezicht was niet, tot volkomen identiteit aan toe, *die van mijzelf!*

Het was Wilson; hij sprak echter niet meer op fluisterende toon en ik had me kunnen voorstellen dat ik zelf sprak toen hij zei:

*'U hebt gewonnen, en ik wijk. Toch zijt gij voortaan ook dood – dood voor de Wereld, en voor de Hemel en voor de Hoop! In mij bestond gij – en hoe volkomen hebt gij in mijn dood, getuige dit beeld, dat een beeld van u is, uzelf vermoord.'*

William Wilson

Edgar Allan Poe, *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*, J.M.Dent & Sons, London, 1912, p. 3-21.

What say of it? what say of CONSCIENCE grim,  
That spectre in my path? CHAMBERLAYNE'S *Pharronida*

Let me call myself, for the present, William Wilson. The fair page now lying before me need not be sullied with my real appellation. This has been already too much an object for the scorn - for the horror - for the detestation of my race. To the uttermost regions of the globe have not the indignant winds bruited its unparalleled infamy? Oh, outcast of all outcasts most abandoned! - to the earth art thou not forever dead? to its honours, to its flowers, to its golden aspirations? - and a cloud, dense, dismal, and limitless, does it not hang eternally between thy hopes and heaven?

I would not, if I could, here or to-day, embody a record of my later years of unspeakable misery, and unpardonable crime. This epoch - these later years - took unto themselves a sudden elevation in turpitude, whose origin alone it is my present purpose to assign. Men usually grow base by degrees. From me, in an instant, all virtue dropped bodily as a mantle. From comparatively trivial wickedness I passed, with the stride of a giant, into more than the enormities of an Elah-Gabalus. What a chance - what one event brought this evil thing to pass, bear with me while I relate. Death approaches; and the shadow which foreruns him has thrown a softening influence over my spirit. I long, in passing through the dim valley, for the sympathy - I had nearly said for the pity - of my fellow-men. I would fain have them believe that I have been, in some measure, the slave of circumstances beyond human control. I would wish them to seek out for me, in the details I am about to give, some little oasis of *fatality* amid a wilderness of error. I would have them allow - what they cannot refrain from allowing - that, although temptation may have erewhile existed as great, man was never *thus*, at least, tempted before - certainly, never *thus* fell. And is it therefore that he has never thus suffered? Have I not indeed been living in a dream? And am I not now dying a victim to the horror and the mystery of the wildest of all sublunary visions?

I am the descendant of a race whose imaginative and easily excitable temperament has at all times rendered them remarkable; and, in my earliest infancy, I gave evidence of having fully inherited the family character. As I advanced in years it was more strongly developed; becoming, for many reasons, a cause of serious disquietude to my friends, and of positive injury to myself. I grew self-willed, addicted to the wildest caprices, and a prey to the most ungovernable passions. Weak-minded, and beset with constitutional infirmities akin to my own, my parents could do but little to check the evil propensities which distinguished me. Some feeble and ill-directed efforts resulted in complete failure on their part, and, of course, in total triumph on mine. Thenceforward my voice was a household law; and at an age when few children have abandoned their leading-strings, I was left to the guidance of my own will, and became, in all but name, the master of my own actions.

My earliest recollections of a school-life, are connected with a large, rambling, Elizabethan house, in a misty-looking village of England, where were a vast number of gigantic and gnarled trees, and where all the houses were excessively ancient. In truth, it was a dream-like and spirit-soothing place, that venerable old town. At this moment, in fancy, I feel the refreshing chilliness of its deeply-shadowed avenues, inhale the fragrance of its thousand shrubberies, and thrill anew with undefinable delight, at the

deep hollow note of the church-bell, breaking, each hour, with sullen and sudden roar, upon the stillness of the dusky atmosphere in which the fretted Gothic steeple lay imbedded and asleep.

It gives me, perhaps, as much of pleasure as I can now in any manner experience, to dwell upon minute recollections of the school and its concerns. Steeped in misery as I am - misery, alas! only too real - I shall be pardoned for seeking relief, however slight and temporary, in the weakness of a few rambling details. These, moreover, utterly trivial, and even ridiculous in themselves, assume, to my fancy, adventitious importance, as connected with a period and a locality when and where I recognize the first ambiguous monitions of the destiny which afterwards so fully overshadowed me. Let me then remember.

The house, I have said, was old and irregular. The grounds were extensive, and a high and solid brick wall, topped with a bed of mortar and broken glass, encompassed the whole. This prison-like rampart formed the limit of our domain; beyond it we saw but thrice a week - once every Saturday afternoon, when, attended by two ushers, we were permitted to take brief walks in a body through some of the neighbouring fields - and twice during Sunday, when we were paraded in the same formal manner to the morning and evening service in the one church of the village. Of this church the principal of our school was pastor. With how deep a spirit of wonder and perplexity was I wont to regard him from our remote pew in the gallery, as, with step solemn and slow, he ascended the pulpit! This reverend man, with countenance so demurely benign, with robes so glossy and so clerically flowing, with wig so minutely powdered, so rigid and so vast, - could this be he who, of late, with sour visage, and in snuffy habiliments, administered, ferule in hand, the Draconian laws of the academy? Oh, gigantic paradox, too utterly monstrous for solution!

At an angle of the ponderous wall frowned a more ponderous gate. It was riveted and studded with iron bolts, and surmounted with jagged iron spikes. What impression of deep awe did it inspire! It was never opened save for the three periodical egressions and ingressions already mentioned; then, in every creak of its mighty hinges, we found a plenitude of mystery - a world of matter for solemn remark, or for more solemn meditation.

The extensive enclosure was irregular in form, having many capacious recesses. Of these, three or four of the largest constituted the play-ground. It was level, and covered with fine hard gravel. I well remember it had no trees, nor benches, nor anything similar within it. Of course it was in the rear of the house. In front lay a small parterre, planted with box and other shrubs; but through this sacred division we passed only upon rare occasions indeed - such as a first advent to school or final departure thence, or perhaps, when a parent or friend having called for us, we joyfully took our way home for the Christmas or Midsummer holidays.

But the house! - how quaint an old building was this! - to me how veritably a place of enchantment! There was really no end to its windings - to its incomprehensible subdivisions. It was difficult at any given time, to say with certainty upon which of its two stories one happened to be. From each room to every other there were sure to be found three or four steps either in ascent or descent. Then the lateral branches were innumerable - inconceivable - and so returning in upon themselves, that our most exact ideas in regard to the whole mansion were not very far different from those with which we pondered upon infinity. During the five years of my residence here, I was never able to ascertain with precision, in



what remote locality lay the little sleeping apartment assigned to myself and some eighteen or twenty other scholars.

The school-room was the largest in the house - I could not help thinking, in the world. It was very long, narrow, and dismally low, with pointed Gothic windows and a ceiling of oak. In a remote and terror-inspiring angle was a square enclosure of eight or ten feet, comprising the *sanctum*, 'during hours', or our principal, the Reverend Dr Bransby. It was a solid structure, with massy door, sooner than open which in the absence of the 'Dominie', we would all have willingly perished by the *peine forte et dure*. In other angles were two other similar boxes, far less revered, indeed, but still greatly matters of awe. One of these was the pulpit of the 'classical' usher, one of the 'English and mathematical'. Interspersed about the room, crossing and recrossing in endless irregularity, were innumerable benches and desks, black, ancient, and time-worn, piled desperately with much-bethumbed books, and so bespattered with initial letters, names at full length, grotesque figures, and other multiplied efforts of the knife, as to have entirely lost what little of original form might have been their portion in days long departed. A huge bucket with water stood at one extremity of the room, and a clock of stupendous dimensions at the other.

Encompassed by the massy walls of this venerable academy, I passed, yet not in tedium or disgust, the years of the third lustrum of my life. The teeming brain of childhood requires no external world of incident to occupy or amuse it; and the apparently dismal monotony of a school was replete with more intense excitement than my riper youth has derived from luxury, or my full manhood from crime. Yet I must believe that my first mental development had in it much of the uncommon - even much of the *outré*. Upon mankind at large the events of very early existence rarely leave in mature age any definite impression. All is grey shadow - a weak and irregular remembrance - an indistinct regathering of feeble pleasures and phantasmagoric pains. With me this is not so. In childhood I must have felt with the energy of a man what I now find stamped upon memory in lines as vivid, as deep, and as durable as the *exergues* of the Carthaginian medals.

Yet in fact - in the fact of the world's view - how little was there to remember! The morning's awakening, the nightly summons to bed; the connings, the recitations; the periodical half-holidays, and perambulations; the play-ground, with its broils, its pastimes, its intrigues; - these, by a mental sorcery long forgotten, were made to involve a wilderness of sensation, a world of rich incident, a universe of varied emotion, of excitement the most passionate and spirit-stirring. '*Oh, le bon temps, que ce siècle de fer!*'

In truth, the ardour, the enthusiasm, and the imperiousness of my disposition, soon rendered me a marked character among my schoolmates, and by slow, but natural gradations, gave me an ascendancy over all not greatly older than myself; - over all with a single exception. This exception was found in the person of a scholar, who, although no relation, bore the same Christian and surname as myself; - a circumstance, in fact, little remarkable; for, notwithstanding a noble descent, mine was one of those every-day appellations which seem, by prescriptive right, to have been, time out of mind, the common property of the mob. In this narrative I have therefore designated myself as William Wilson, - a fictitious title not very dissimilar to the real. My namesake alone, of those who in school phraseology constituted 'our set', presumed to compete with me in the studies of the class - in the sports and broils of the play-ground - to refuse implicit belief in my assertions, and submission to my will - indeed, to interfere with my arbitrary dictation in any respect whatsoever. If there is on earth a supreme and

unqualified despotism, it is the despotism of a master mind in boyhood over the less energetic spirits of its companions.

Wilson's rebellion was to me a source of the greatest embarrassment; - the more so as, in spite of the bravado with which in public I made a point of treating him and his pretensions, I secretly felt that I feared him, and could not help thinking the equality which he maintained so easily with myself, a proof of his true superiority; since not to be overcome cost me a perpetual struggle. Yet this superiority - even this equality - was in truth acknowledged by no one but myself; our associates, by some unaccountable blindness, seemed not even to suspect it. Indeed, his competition, his resistance, and especially his impertinent and dogged interference with my purposes, were not more pointed than private. He appeared to be destitute alike of the ambition which urged, and of the passionate energy of mind which enabled me to excel. In his rivalry he might have been supposed actuated solely by a whimsical desire to thwart, astonish, or mortify myself; although there were times when I could not help observing, with a feeling made up of wonder, abasement, and pique, that he mingled with his injuries, his insults, or his contradictions, a certain most inappropriate, and assuredly most unwelcome *affectionateness* of manner. I could only conceive this singular behaviour to arise from a consummate self-conceit assuming the vulgar air of patronage and protection.

Perhaps it was this latter trait in Wilson's conduct, conjoined with our identity of name, and the mere accident of our having entered the school upon the same day, which set afloat the notion that we were brothers, among the senior classes in the academy. These do not usually inquire with much strictness into the affairs of their juniors. I have before said, or should have said, that Wilson was not, in the most remote degree, connected with my family. But assuredly if we *had* been brothers we must have been twins; for, after leaving Dr Bransby's, I casually learned that my namesake was born on the nineteenth of January, 1813 - and this is a somewhat remarkable coincidence; for the day is precisely that of my own nativity.

It may seem strange that in spite of the continual anxiety occasioned me by the rivalry of Wilson, and his intolerable spirit of contradiction, I could not bring myself to hate him altogether. We had, to be sure, nearly every day a quarrel in which, yielding me publicly the palm of victory, he, in some manner, contrived to make me feel that it was he who had deserved it; yet a sense of pride on my part, and a veritable dignity on his own, kept us always upon what are called 'speaking terms', where there were many points of strong congeniality in our tempers, operating to awake in me a sentiment which our position alone, perhaps, prevented from ripening into friendship. It is difficult, indeed, to define, or even to describe, my real feelings towards him. They formed a motley and heterogeneous admixture; - some petulant animosity, which was not yet hatred, some esteem, more respect, much fear, with a world of uneasy curiosity. To the moralist it will be unnecessary to say, in addition, that Wilson and myself were the most inseparable of companions.

It was no doubt the anomalous state of affairs existing between us, which turned all my attacks upon him (and they were many, either open or covert) into the channel of banter or practical joke (giving pain while assuming the aspect of mere fun) rather than into a more serious and determined hostility. But my endeavours on this head were by no means uniformly successful, even when my plans were the most wittily concocted; for my namesake had much about him, in character, of that unassuming and quiet austerity which, while enjoying the poignancy of its own jokes, has no heel of Achilles in itself, and absolutely refuses to be laughed at. I could find, indeed, but one vulnerable point, and that, lying in

a personal peculiarity, arising, perhaps, from constitutional disease, would have been spared by any antagonist less at his wit's end than myself - my rival had a weakness in the faucial or guttural organs, which precluded him from raising his voice at any time *above a very low whisper*. Of this defect I did not fail to take what poor advantage lay in my power.

Wilson's retaliations in kind were many; and there was one form of his practical wit that disturbed me beyond measure. How his sagacity first discovered at all that so petty a thing would vex me, is a question I never could solve; but, having discovered, he habitually practised the annoyance. I had always felt aversion to my uncourtly patronymic, and its very common, if not plebeian praenomen. The words were venom in my ears; and when, upon the day of my arrival, a second William Wilson came also to the academy, I felt angry with him for bearing the name, and doubly disgusted with the name because a stranger bore it, who would be the cause of its two-fold repetition, who would be constantly in my presence, and whose concerns, in the ordinary routine of the school business, must inevitably, on account of the detestable coincidence, be often confounded with my own.

The feeling of vexation thus engendered grew stronger with every circumstance tending to show resemblance, moral or physical, between my rival and myself. I had not then discovered the remarkable fact that we were of the same age; but I saw that we were of the same height, and I perceived that we were even singularly alike in general contour of person and outline of feature. I was galled, too, by the rumour touching a relationship, which had grown current in the upper forms. In a word, nothing could more seriously disturb me (although I scrupulously concealed such disturbance), than any allusion to a similarity of mind, person, or condition existing between us. But, in truth, I had no reason to believe that (with the exception of the matter of relationship, and in the case of Wilson himself) this similarity had ever been made a subject of comment, or even observed at all by our schoolfellows. That *he* observed it in all its bearings, and as fixedly as I, was apparent; but that he could discover in such circumstances so fruitful a field of annoyance, can only be attributed, as I said before, to his more than usual penetration.

His cue, which was to perfect an imitation of myself, lay both in words and in actions; and most admirably did he play his part. My dress it was an easy matter to copy; my gait and general manner were, without difficulty, appropriated; in spite of his constitutional defect, even my voice did not escape him. My louder tones were, of course, unattempted, but then the key, it was identical; *and his singular whisper, it grew the very echo of my own*.

How greatly this most exquisite portraiture harassed me (for it could not justly be termed a caricature), I will not now venture to describe. I had but one consolation - in the fact that the imitation, apparently, was noticed by myself alone, and that I had to endure only the knowing and strangely sarcastic smiles of my namesake himself. Satisfied with having produced in my bosom the intended effect, he seemed to chuckle in secret over the sting he had inflicted, and was characteristically disregardful of the public applause which the success of his witty endeavours might have so easily elicited. That the school, indeed, did not feel his design, perceive its accomplishment, and participate in his sneer, was, for many anxious months, a riddle I could not resolve. Perhaps the *gradation* of his copy rendered it not so readily perceptible; or, more possibly, I owed my security to the masterly air of the copyist, who, disdainful of the letter (which in a painting is all the obtuse can see), gave but the full spirit of his original for my individual contemplation and chagrin.

I have already more than once spoken of the disgusting air of patronage which he assumed toward me, and of his frequent officious interference with my will. This interference often took the ungracious character of advice; advice not openly given, but hinted or insinuated. I received it with a repugnance which gained strength as I grew in years. Yet, at this distant day, let me do him the simple justice to acknowledge that I can recall no occasion when the suggestions of my rival were on the side of those errors or follies so usual to his immature age and seeming inexperience; that his moral sense, at least, if not his general talents and worldly wisdom, was far keener than my own; and that I might, to-day, have been a better, and thus a happier man, had I less frequently rejected the counsels embodied in those meaning whispers which I then but too cordially hated and too bitterly despised.

As it was, I at length grew restive in the extreme under his distasteful supervision, and daily resented more and more openly what I considered his intolerable arrogance. I have said that, in the first years of our connection as schoolmates, my feelings in regard to him might have been easily ripened into friendship: but, in the latter months of my residence at the academy, although the intrusion of his ordinary manner had, beyond doubt, in some measure, abated, my sentiments, in nearly similar proportion, partook very much of positive hatred. Upon one occasion he saw this, I think, and afterwards avoided, or made a show of avoiding me.

It was about the same period, if I remember aright, that, in an altercation of violence with him, in which he was more than usually thrown off his guard, and spoke and acted with an openness of demeanour rather foreign to his nature, I discovered, or fancied I discovered, in his accent, his air, and general appearance, a something which first startled, and then deeply interested me, by bringing to mind dim visions of my earliest infancy - wild, confused, and thronging memories of a time when memory herself was yet unborn. I cannot better describe the sensation which oppressed me than by saying that I could with difficulty shake off the belief of my having been acquainted with the being who stood before me, at some epoch very long ago - some point of the past even infinitely remote. The delusion, however, faded rapidly as it came; and I mention it at all but to define the day of the last conversation I there held with my singular namesake.

The huge old house, with its countless subdivisions, had several large chambers communicating with each other, where slept the greater number of the students. There were, however (as must necessarily happen in a building so awkwardly planned), many little nooks or recesses, the odds and ends of the structure; and these the economic ingenuity of Dr Bransby had also fitted up as dormitories; although, being the merest closets, they were capable of accommodating but a single individual. One of these small apartments was occupied by Wilson.

One night, about the close of my fifth year at the school, and immediately after the altercation just mentioned, finding every one wrapped in sleep, I arose from bed, and, lamp in hand, stole through a wilderness of narrow passages from my own bedroom to that of my rival. I had long been plotting one of those ill-natured pieces of practical wit at his expense in which I had hitherto been so uniformly unsuccessful. It was my intention, now, to put my scheme in operation, and I resolved to make him feel the whole extent of the malice with which I was imbued. Having reached his closet, I noiselessly entered, leaving the lamp, with a shade over it, on the outside. I advanced a step, and listened to the sound of his tranquil breathing. Assured of his being sleep, I returned, took the light, and with it again approached the bed. Close curtains were around it, which, in the prosecution of my plan, I slowly and quietly withdrew, when the bright rays fell vividly upon the sleeper, and my eyes, at the same moment,

upon his countenance. I looked; - and a numbness, an iciness of feeling instantly pervaded my frame. My breast heaved, my knees tottered, my whole spirit became possessed with an objectless yet intolerable horror. Gasping for breath, I lowered the lamp in still nearer proximity to the face. Were these - *these* the lineaments of William Wilson? I saw, indeed, that they were his, but I shook as if with a fit of the ague in fancying they were not. What *was* there about them to confound me in this manner? I gazed; - while my brain reeled with a multitude of incoherent thoughts. Not thus he appeared - assuredly not *thus* - in the vivacity of his waking hours. The same name! the same contour of person! the same day of arrival at the academy! And then his dogged and meaningless imitation of my gait, my voice, my habits, and my manner! Was it, in truth, within the bounds of human possibility, that *what I now saw* was the result, merely, of the habitual practice of this sarcastic imitation? Awestricken, and with a creeping shudder, I extinguished the lamp, passed silently from the chamber, and left at once, the halls of that old academy, never to enter them again.

After a lapse of some months, spent at home in mere idleness, I found myself a student at Eton. The brief interval had been sufficient to enfeeble my remembrance of the events at Dr Bransby's, or at least to effect a material change in the nature of the feelings with which I remembered them. The truth - the tragedy - of the drama was no more. I could now find room to doubt the evidence of my senses; and seldom called up the subject at all but with wonder at the extent of human credulity, and a smile at the vivid force of the imagination which I hereditarily possessed. Neither was this species of scepticism likely to be diminished by the character of the life I led at Eton. The vortex of thoughtless folly into which I there so immediately and so recklessly plunged, washed away all but the froth of my past hours, engulfed at once every solid or serious impression, and left to memory only the veriest levities of a former existence.

I do not wish, however, to trace the course of my miserable profligacy here - a profligacy which set at defiance the laws, while it eluded the vigilance of the institution. Three years of folly, passed without profit, had but given me rooted habits of vice, and added, in a somewhat unusual degree, to my bodily stature, when, after a week of soulless dissipation, I invited a small party of the most dissolute students to a secret carousal in my chambers. We met at a late hour of the night; for our debaucheries were to be faithfully protracted until morning. The wine flowed freely, and there were not wanting other and perhaps more dangerous seductions; so that the grey dawn had already faintly appeared in the east, while our delirious extravagance was at its height. Madly flushed with cards and intoxication, I was in the act of insisting upon a toast of more than wonted profanity, when my attention was suddenly diverted by the violent, although partial unclosing of the door of the apartment, and by the eager voice of a servant from without. He said that some person, apparently in great haste, demanded to speak with me in the hall.

Wildly excited with wine, the unexpected interruption rather delighted than surprised me. I staggered forward at once, and a few steps brought me to the vestibule of the building. In this low and small room there hung no lamp; and now no light at all was admitted, save that of the exceedingly feeble dawn which made its way through the semi-circular window. As I put my foot over the threshold, I became aware of the figure of a youth about my own height, and habited in a white kerseymere morning frock, cut in the novel fashion of the one I myself wore at the moment. This the faint light enabled me to perceive; but the features of his face I could not distinguish. Upon my entering he strode hurriedly up to me, and, seizing me by the arm with a gesture of petulant impatience, whispered the words 'William Wilson!' in my ear.

I grew perfectly sober in an instant.

There was that in the manner of the stranger, and in the tremulous shake of his uplifted finger, as he held it between my eyes and the light, which filled me with unqualified amazement; but it was not this which so violently moved me. It was the pregnancy of solemn admonition in the singular, low, hissing utterance; and, above all, it was the character, the tone, *the key*, of those few, simple, and familiar, yet *whispered* syllables, which came with a thousand thronging memories of by-gone days, and struck upon my soul with the shock of a galvanic battery. Ere I could recover the use of my senses he was gone.

Although this event failed not of a vivid effect upon my disordered imagination, yet was it evanescent as vivid. For some weeks, indeed, I busied myself in earnest inquiry, or was wrapped in a cloud of morbid speculation. I did not pretend to disguise from my perception the identity of the singular individual who thus perseveringly interfered with my affairs, and harassed me with his insinuated counsel. But who and what was this Wilson? - and whence came he? - and what were his purposes? Upon neither of these points could I be satisfied; merely ascertaining, in regard to him, that a sudden accident in his family had caused his removal from Dr Bransby's academy on the afternoon of the day in which I myself had eloped. But in a brief period I ceased to think upon the subject; my attention being all absorbed in a contemplated departure for Oxford. Thither I soon went; the uncalculating vanity of my parents furnishing me with an outfit and annual establishment, which would enable me to indulge at will in the luxury already so dear to my heart, - to vie in profuseness of expenditure with the haughtiest heirs of the wealthiest earldoms in Great Britain.

Excited by such appliances to vice, my constitutional temperament broke forth with redoubled ardour, and I spurned even the common restraints of decency in the mad infatuation of my revels. But it were absurd to pause in the details of my extravagance. Let it suffice, that among spendthrifts I out-Heroded Herod, and that, giving name to a multitude of novel follies, I added no brief appendix to the long catalogue of vices then usual in the most dissolute university of Europe.

It could hardly be credited, however, that I had, even here, so utterly fallen from the gentlemanly estate, as to seek acquaintance with the vilest arts of the gambler by profession, and, having become an adept in his despicable science, to practise it habitually as a means of increasing my already enormous income at the expense of the weak-minded among my fellow-collegians. Such, nevertheless, was the fact. And the very enormity of this offence against all manly and honourable sentiment proved, beyond doubt, the main if not the sole reason of the impunity with which it was committed. Who, indeed, among my most abandoned associates, would not rather have disputed the clearest evidence of his senses, than have suspected of such courses, the gay, the frank, the generous William Wilson - the noblest and most liberal commoner at Oxford - him whose follies (said his parasites) were but the follies of youth and unbridled fancy - whose errors but inimitable whim - whose darkest vice but a careless and dashing extravagance?

I had been now two years successfully busied in this way, when there came to the university a young *parvenu* nobleman, Glendinning - rich, said reports, as Herodes Atticus - his riches, too, as easily acquired. I soon found him of weak intellect, and, of course, marked him as a fitting subject for my skill. I frequently engaged him in play, and contrived, with the gambler's usual art, to let him win considerable sums, the more effectually to entangle him in my snares. At length, my schemes being ripe, I met him (with the full intention that this meeting should be final and decisive) at the chambers of a

fellow-commoner (Mr Preston), equally intimate with both, but who, to do him justice, entertained not even a remote suspicion of my design. To give him a better colouring, I had contrived to have assembled a party of some eight or ten, and was solicitously careful that the introduction of cards should appear accidental, and originate in the proposal of my contemplated dupe himself. To be brief upon a vile topic, none of the low finesse was omitted, so customary upon similar occasions that it is a just matter for wonder how any are still found so besotted as to fall its victim.

We had protracted our sitting far into the night, and I had at length effected the manoeuvre of getting Glendinning as my sole antagonist. The game, too, was my favourite *ecarte*. The rest of the company, interested in the extent of our play, had abandoned their own cards, and were standing around us as spectators. The *parvenu*, who had been induced by my artifices in the early part of the evening, to drink deeply, now shuffled, dealt, or played, with a wild nervousness of manner for which his intoxication, I thought, might partially, but could not altogether account. In a very short period he had become my debtor to a large amount, when, having taken a long draught of port, he did precisely what I had been coolly anticipating – he proposed to double our already extravagant stakes. With a well-feigned show of reluctance, and not until after my repeated refusal had seduced him into some angry words which gave a colour of *pique* to my compliance, did I finally comply. The result, of course, did but prove how entirely the prey was in my toils; in less than an hour he had quadrupled his debt. For some time his countenance had been losing the florid tinge lent it by the wine; but now, to my astonishment, I perceived that it had grown to a pallor truly fearful. I say to my astonishment. Glendinning had been represented to my eager inquiries as immeasurably wealthy; and the sums which he had as yet lost, although in themselves vast, could not, I supposed, very seriously annoy, much less so violently affect him. That he was overcome by the wine just swallowed, was the idea which most readily presented itself; and, rather with a view to the preservation of my own character in the eyes of my associates, than from any less interested motive, I was about to insist, peremptorily, upon a discontinuance of the play, when some expressions at my elbow from among the company, and an ejaculation evincing utter despair on the part of Glendinning, gave me to understand that I had effected his total ruin under circumstances which, rendering him an object for the pity of all, should have protected him from the ill offices even of a fiend.

What now might have been my conduct it is difficult to say. The pitiable condition of my dupe had thrown an air of embarrassed gloom over all; and, for some moments, a profound silence was maintained, during which I could not help feeling my cheeks tingle with the many burning glances of scorn or reproach cast upon me by the less abandoned of the party. I will even own that an intolerable weight of anxiety was for a brief instant lifted from my bosom by the sudden and extraordinary interruption which ensued. The wide, heavy folding doors of the apartment were all at once thrown open, to their full extent, with a vigorous and rushing impetuosity that extinguished, as if by magic, every candle in the room. Their light, in dying, enabled us just to perceive that a stranger had entered, about my own height, and closely muffled in a cloak. The darkness, however, was now total; and we could only *feel* that he was standing in our midst. Before any one of us could recover from the extreme astonishment into which this rudeness had thrown all, we heard the voice of the intruder.

'Gentlemen,' he said in a low, distinct, and never-to-be-forgotten *whisper* which thrilled to the very marrow of my bones, 'Gentlemen, I make no apology for this behaviour, because in this behaving, I am but fulfilling a duty. You are, beyond doubt, uninformed of the true character of the person who has to-night won at *ecarte* a large sum of money from Lord Glendinning. I will therefore put you upon an

expeditious and decisive plan of obtaining this very necessary information. Please to examine, at your leisure, the inner linings of the cuff of his left sleeve, and the several little packages which may be found in the somewhat capacious pockets of his embroidered morning wrapper.'

While he spoke, so profound was the stillness that one might have heard a pin drop upon the floor. In ceasing, he departed at once, and as abruptly as he had entered. Can I - shall I describe my sensations? - must I say that I felt all the horrors of the damned? Most assuredly I had little time given for reflection. Many hands roughly seized me upon the spot, and lights were immediately re-procured. A search ensued. In the lining of my sleeve were found all the court cards essential in *ecarte*, and, in the pockets of my wrapper, a number of packs, facsimiles of those used at our sittings, with the single exception that mine were of the species called, technically, *arrondees*; the honours being slightly convex at the ends, the lower cards slightly convex at the sides. In this disposition, the dupe who cuts, as customary, at the length of the pack, will invariably find that he cuts his antagonist an honour; while the gambler, cutting at the breadth, will, as certainly, cut nothing for his victim which may count in the records of the game.

Any burst of indignation upon this discovery would have affected me less than the silent contempt, or the sarcastic composure, with which it was received.

'Mr Wilson,' said our host, stooping to remove from beneath his feet an exceedingly luxurious cloak of rare furs, 'Mr Wilson, this is your property.' (The weather was cold; and, upon quitting my own room, I had thrown a cloak over my dressing-wrapper, putting it off upon reaching the scene of play.) 'I presume it is supererogatory to seek here' (eyeing the folds of the garment with a bitter smile) 'for any farther evidence of your skill. Indeed, we have had enough. You will see the necessity, I hope, of quitting Oxford - at all events, of quitting instantly my chambers.'

Abased, humbled to the dust as I then was, it is probable that I should have resented this galling language by immediate personal violence, had not my whole attention been at the moment arrested by the fact of the most startling character. The cloak which I had worn was of a rare description of fur; how rare, how extravagantly costly, I shall not venture to say. Its fashion, too, was of my own fantastic invention; for I was fastidious to an absurd degree of coxcombry, in matter of this frivolous nature. When, therefore, Mr Preston reached me that which he had picked up upon the floor, and near the folding doors of the apartment, it was with an astonishment nearly bordering upon terror, that I perceived my own already hanging on my arm (where I had no doubt unwittingly placed it), and that the one presented me was but its exact counterpart in every, in even the minutest possible particular. The singular being who had so disastrously exposed me, had been muffled, I remembered, in a cloak; and none had been worn at all by any of the members of our party with the exception of myself. Retaining some presence of mind, I took the one offered me by Preston, placed it, unnoticed, over my own, left the apartment with a resolute scowl of defiance; and, next morning ere dawn of day, commenced a hurried journey from Oxford to the continent, in a perfect agony of horror and of shame.

*I fled in vain.* My evil destiny pursued me as if in exultation, and proved, indeed, that the exercise of its mysterious dominion had as yet only begun. Scarcely had I set foot in Paris ere I had fresh evidence of the detestable interest taken by this Wilson in my concerns. Years flew, while I experienced no relief. Villain! - at Rome, with how untimely, yet with how spectral an officiousness, stepped he in between me and my ambition! At Vienna, too - at Berlin - and at Moscow! Where, in truth, had I *not* bitter



cause to curse him within my heart? From his inscrutable tyranny did I at length flee, panic-stricken, as from a pestilence; and to the very ends of the earth *I fled in vain*.

And again, and again, in secret communion with my own spirit, would I demand the questions 'Who is he? - whence came he? - and what are his objects?' But no answer was there found. And then I scrutinized, with a minute scrutiny, the forms, and the methods, and the leading traits of his impertinent supervision. But even here there was very little upon which to base a conjecture. It was noticeable, indeed, that, in no one of the multiplied instances in which he had of late crossed my path, had he so crossed it except to frustrate those schemes, or to disturb those actions, which, if fully carried out, might have resulted in bitter mischief. Poor justification this, in truth, for an authority so imperiously assumed! Poor indemnity for natural rights of self-agency so pertinaciously, so insultingly denied!

I had also been forced to notice that my tormentor, for a very long period of time (while scrupulously and with miraculous dexterity maintaining his whim of an identity of apparel with myself) had so contrived it, in the execution of his varied interferences with my will, that I saw not, at any moment, the features of his face. Be Wilson what he might, *this*, at least, was but the veriest of affectation, or of folly. Could he, for an instant, have supposed that, in my admonisher at Eton - in the destroyer of my honour at Oxford, - in him who thwarted my ambition at Rome, my revenge at Paris, my passionate love at Naples, or what he falsely termed my avarice in Egypt, - that in this, my arch-enemy and evil genius, I could fail to recognize the William Wilson of my school-boy days, - the namesake, the companion, the rival, - the hated and dreaded rival at Dr Bransby's? Impossible! But let me hasten to the last eventful scene of the drama.

Thus far I had succumbed supinely to this imperious domination. The sentiments of deep awe with which I habitually regarded the elevated character, the majestic wisdom, the apparent omnipresence and omnipotence of Wilson, added to a feeling of even terror, with which certain other traits in his nature and assumptions inspired me, had operated, hitherto, to impress me with an idea of my own utter weakness and helplessness, and to suggest an implicit, although bitterly reluctant submission to his arbitrary will. But, of late days, I had given myself up entirely to wine; and its maddening influence upon my hereditary temper rendered me more and more impatient of control. I began to murmur, - to hesitate, - to resist. And was it only fancy which induced me to believe that, with the increase of my own firmness, that of my tormentor underwent a proportional diminution? Be this as it may, I now began to feel the inspiration of a burning hope, and at length nurtured in my secret thoughts a stern and desperate resolution that I would submit no longer to be enslaved.

It was at Rome, during the Carnival of 18 - , that I attended a masquerade in the palazzo of the Neapolitan Duke Di Broglio. I had indulged more freely than usual in the excesses of the wine-table; and now the suffocating atmosphere of the crowded rooms irritated me beyond endurance. The difficulty, too, of forcing my way through the mazes of the company contributed not a little to the ruffling of my temper; for I was anxiously seeking (let me not say with what unworthy motive) the young, the gay, the beautiful wife of the aged and doting Di Broglio. With a too unscrupulous confidence she had previously communicated to me the secret of the costume in which she would be habited, and now, having caught a glimpse of her person, I was hurrying to make my way into her presence. - At this moment I felt a light hand placed upon my shoulder, and that ever-remembered, low, damnable *whisper* within my ear.

In an absolute frenzy of wrath, I turned at once upon him who had thus interrupted me, and seized him violently by the collar. He was attired, as I had expected, in a costume altogether similar to my own; wearing a Spanish cloak of blue velvet, begirt about the waist with a crimson belt sustaining a rapier. A mask of black silk entirely covered his face.

'Scoundrel!' I said, in a voice husky with rage, while every syllable I uttered seemed as new fuel to my fury, 'scoundrel! imposter! accursed villain! you shall not - you *shall* not dog me unto death! Follow me, or I stab you where you stand!' - and I broke my way from the ballroom into a small ante-chamber adjoining - dragging him unresistingly with me as I went.

Upon entering, I thrust him furiously from me. He staggered against the wall, while I closed the door with an oath, and commanded him to draw. He hesitated but for an instant; then, with a slight sigh, drew in silence, and put himself upon his defence.

The contest was brief indeed. I was frantic with every species of wild excitement, and felt within my single arm the energy and power of a multitude. In a few seconds I forced him by sheer strength against the wainscoting, and thus, getting him at mercy, plunged my sword, with brute ferocity, repeatedly through and through his bosom.

At that instant some person tried the latch of the door. I hastened to prevent an intrusion, and then immediately returned to my dying antagonist. But what human language can adequately portray *that* astonishment, *that* horror which possessed me at the spectacle then presented to view? The brief moment in which I averted my eyes had been sufficient to produce, apparently, a material change in the arrangements at the upper or farther end of the room. A large mirror, - so at first it seemed to me in my confusion - now stood where none had been perceptible before; and, as I stepped up to it in extremity of terror, mine own image, but with features all pale and dabbled in blood, advanced to meet me with a feeble and tottering gait.

Thus it appeared, I say, but was not. It was my antagonist - it was Wilson, who then stood before me in the agonies of his dissolution. His mask and cloak lay, where he had thrown them, upon the floor. Not a thread in all his raiment - not a line in all the marked and singular lineaments of his face which was not, even in the most absolute identity, *mine own!*

It was Wilson; but he spoke no longer in a whisper, and I could have fancied that I myself was speaking while he said:

*'You have conquered, and I yield. Yet, henceforward art thou also dead - dead to the World, to Heaven, and to hope! In me didst thou exist - and, in my death, see by this image, which is thine own, how utterly thou hast murdered thyself.'*

## Narcissus en Echo

Ovidius, *Metamorfosen III – Narcissus en Echo* –, vertaling als verschaft door E. Duyck & Tradupolis.

Tiresias trok, vermaard in heel Beotië, van stad naar stad en sprak feilloos op verzoek der mensen zijn voorspellingen. De eerste die de waarheid van zijn zienswoord beproefde, was waternimf Liriope, die ooit omarmd was door de bochtige Cephisusstroom; hij had haar in zijn water gevangen en verkracht. De schone nimf, zwanger geraakt, baarde een kind op wie ook toen al iedereen verliefd werd. Zij noemde het Narcissus en ze vroeg Tiresias of het lang leven zou en 'n rijpe ouderdom bereiken. "Zolang hij niet zichzelf kent," zo voorspelde de profeet. Vrij lang leek dit een onbestemde uitspraak, tot de afloop -zijn vreemde passie en zijn sterven- haar bevestigde. Narcissus had na driemaal vijf zijn zestiende verjaardag gevierd, leek nog een knaap, maar was reeds evenzeer volwassen als diepbemind bij vele mannen en bij vele meisjes, maar in zijn prille schoonheid zo hooghartig, dat hij zich nooit aan liet raken door die vele mannen, nooit door meisjes... Als hij een keer schichtige herten in de netten drijft, ziet Echo hem, praatgrage nimf, die nooit haar mond kan houden als iemand spreekt, noch uit zichzelf kan spreken, maar slechts napraat.

Echo was tot hiertoe een lichaam, niet enkel een stem. En toch had de praatzieke geen ander gebruik van haar spraakvermogen dan dat ze nu heeft: ze kon namelijk uit vele woorden de laatste woorden weergeven. Juno had dit gedaan omdat ze de godin opzettelijk in een lang gesprek hield zodat de nimfen zouden kunnen vluchten, op het ogenblik dat Juno de nimfen onder aan de berg liggend onder haar Jupiter had kunnen betrappen. Toen Juno dit merkte, zei ze: "Van die taal waardoor ik bedrogen ben, zal jou een klein vermogen gegeven worden en van de stem een zeer kort gebruik." En met daden bevestigde ze haar bedreiging. Haar stem verdubbelde slechts wat als laatste gezegd was en ze bracht gehoorde woorden terug. Toen de jongen toevallig van z'n groep trouwe makkers was afgedwaald, zei hij: "Is er iemand?" en "Er is!" had Echo geantwoord. Hij was hierdoor verbaasd en toen hij overal een scherpe blik had geworpen, riep hij met luide stem "Ik kom!"; zij riep wat geroepen was. Hij keek om en toen opnieuw niemand kwam, zei hij: "Waarom ontvlucht je mij?". En evenveel woorden die hij gezegd had, kreeg hij terug. Hij volhardde en toen hij bedrogen was door het afwisselende beeld van de stem, zei hij: "Laten we samenkomen!" en op geen enkel ander geluid zou Echo ooit liever geantwoord hebben. "Laten we samenkomen!", herhaalde Echo. Ze begunstigde zelf haar eigen woorden en kwam uit de bossen om haar armen rond de lang verwachte hals te gooien. Hij vluchtte en al vluchtend zei hij: "Neem je armen uit hun omhelzing! Ik sterf nog liever dan dat jij macht krijgt over ons!". Zij antwoordde niets anders dan: "Moge jij macht krijgen over ons!". Veracht verborg ze zich in de bossen, haar beschaamd gezicht beschermde ze met gebladerte en sindsdien leeft ze eenzaam in grotten. Maar toch klampte ze zich vast en groeide de liefde ondanks de pijn van de afwijzing. Ook verzwakten de wakkere zorgen haar ellendige lichaam, de uitputting deed haar huid verschrompelen en de sappen van heel haar lichaam gingen in lucht op. Slechts haar stem en beenderen bleven over. De stem bleef; men zegt dat haar beenderen de vorm van stenen hebben aangenomen. Daarna verborg ze zich in de bossen en werd ze op geen enkele berg meer gezien; ze werd door iedereen gehoord: het is de stem die leeft in haar.

Aldus ontliet Narcissus haar, ontliet ook andere nimfen die bij bos en water wonen, ook, als knaap, verliefde mannen. Ja, een van hen had al beledigd, handen hemelwaarts, gesmeekt: "Laat hem ook zo verliefd zijn! Laat ook zijn geliefde ongrijpbaar zijn!" en Nemesis heeft dat gebed verhoord. Er was een helder meer met zilverachtig, glanzend water nog nooit door herdersvolk ontdekt, ook nooit door geiten

die in 't bergland grazen, nooit door ander vee; nooit had een vogel, of roofdier het verstoord, zelfs nooit een afgewaaid tak. Rondom veel groen, goed fris gehouden door 't nabije water, en bomen die de plek beschutten tegen warme zon. Narcissus, moe van 't ingespannen jagen in de hitte, nam daar wat rust, door bron en bronomgeving aangelokt. Maar als hij daar zijn dorst wil lessen groeit een nieuwe dorst, al drinkend aangetrokken door zijn spiegelbeeld, voelt hij begeerte naar iets lichaamloos: wat lichaam lijkt is water. Hij blijft zichzelf bekijken, onbeweeglijk blijft hij strak dat strakke hoofd aankijken, als een beeld van Parosmarmmer. Geknield in 't zand ziet hij zijn ogen als een dubbele ster, zijn haar als Dionysos' lokken, als die van Apollo; zijn wangen zonder baard nog, zijn ivoren hals, de glans van zijn gelaat, een bos vermengd met blanke reinheid, alles waarom hij zelf bewonderd wordt, bewondert hij. Hij wil zichzelf, maar weet dat niet; wordt door zichzelf behaagd en verlangt naar wie naar hem verlangt, door eigen vlam ontvlamd. En dan die vele kussen op een valse waterspiegel, vergeefs! De vele keren dat zijn armen reiken naar die hals, en dat hij midden in het water naar zichzelf grijpt! Hij weet niet wat hij ziet, maar wat hij ziet zet hem in brand. Het is een zelfde schijnbeeld, dat hem aanlokt en teleurstelt. Verliefde dwaas, je jaagt vergeefs op vluchtende gestalten! Wat je begeert is nergens; wend je om en wat je liefhebt is weg; 't is een schaduw van een spiegeling, waarnaar je kijkt, iets wat niets eigens heeft; alleen door jou verschijnt en blijft het, het zal met jou pas weggaan, als jij zelf nog weg kunt gaan. Geen trek in voedsel, geen verlangen om te slapen doet hem wijken van die plek. Voorover in 't beschaduwde gras richt hij zijn blik onafgebroken op die schone leugen, kwijnt in zijn eigen ogen weg, strekt dan halfopgericht zijn armen naar de bomen om hem heen en roept: "Wie heeft er," -hij vraagt het aan de bomen!- "zo hardvochtig liefgehad? Dat moeten jullie weten, velen moeten hier een schuilplaats hebben gezocht. Wie kennen jullie, die in al die tijd van jullie eeuwenlang bestaan zo gruwelijk is gepijnigd? Ik ben verliefd, ik zie mijn lief, maar wat mijn liefde ziet bereik ik niet. Zo'n valse schijn beheerst mij in mijn hartstocht. En wat nog erger pijn doet is, dat ons geen wijde zee, geen verre reis, geen bergen scheiden, geen gesloten stadspoort: alleen dat beetje water! Hij, hij wil graag bij mij zijn, want steeds als ik mijn lippen toesteeek aan het klare water, buigt hij zich gretig naar mij toe, het hoofd ver uit de nek. Ik denk: nu kust hij me; het is zo weinig wat ons, minnaars, uiteenhoudt... Wie je ook bent, kom hier! Waarom, mijn jongenlief, misleid je mij? Waar blijf je, als ik reik? Mijn jeugd, mijn schoonheid jagen jou toch niet weg, als zoveel nimfen mij beminden? Je lief gezicht doet mij steeds weer de mooiste dingen hopen; als ik de armen naar jou strek, strek jij ze ook naar mij; als ik je toelach, lach je terug; steeds zie ik ook jouw tranen als ik moet huilen; op mijn wenken wenk jij naar me terug en naar ik opmaak uit 't bewegen van je fraaie lippen antwoord je mij met woorden die mijn oren niet bereiken... Ik ben het zelf! Ik voel het nu! Mijn schijnbeeld liegt niet meer! Ik gloei uit liefde voor mezelf! Ik voel en voed het vuur... Wat moet ik doen? Hem roepen? Of hij mij? En wat dan roepen? Wat ik verlang is hier, bij mij; maar mijn bezit maakt arm, o, kon ik maar van mijn eigen lichaam afstand nemen! Een vreemde minnaarswens: wegwensen waar je naar verlangt. Maar dit verdriet verteert mijn krachten en mijn tijd van leven is bijna om, want ik ga sterven in mijn eerste bloei. De dood valt mij niet zwaar, omdat de dood mijn pijn zal stillen, maar hem, mijn minnaar, wenste ik een langer leven toe. Nu sterven er straks twee, wij samen, in één mensenadem." Dit zei hij. Ziek van hart richt hij zijn blik weer op zichzelf en breekt de waterspiegel met zijn tranen. Door de deining vertroebelen de trekken. Als hij die vervagen ziet, roept hij: "Waar vlucht je heen? Blijf hier! Laat mij, je minnaar, niet hier alleen! Dat is te wreed! Al mag ik je niet voelen, laat mij je kunnen zien en zo mijn zieke passie stillen." In zijn verdriet heeft hij zijn kleed van bovenaf gescheurd en zich met marmmerwitte vuisten 't blote bovenlichaam gebeukt, en waar hij beukte, ontstonden vlekken, rozerood, zoals ook appels kunnen hebben: deels zijn zij heel blank en verder rood; of druiven die een purperrode gloed vertonen, als ze rijpen aan hun bontgetinte trossen. Als hij zijn wonden ziet –de waterspiegel is weer glad– Verdraagt hij het niet langer, hij kwijnt weg, verteerd door liefde, smeltend als gele was boven een lichte vlam, als

dauw verdwijnend in de lauwe ochtendzon –zo smelt hij weg en wordt langzaam opgevreten door onzichtbaar liefdesvuur. Zijn lichaam heeft geen blanke glans meer, geen gezonde blossen, geen kracht of fut meer; niets wat eerst zo lieflijk scheen; heeft niets meer van het lichaam waar eens Echo naar verlangd had... Zij zag hem wel en werd, ondanks haar niet vergeten wrok, bedroefd om hem en steeds weer, als de jongen in zijn wanhoop "Ai mij!" riep, riep zij met haar echowoorden ook "Ai mij!" en als hij met zijn vuisten tegen eigen schouders sloeg, liet zij dezelfde klanken van verdriet en rouw weerklinken. Zijn laatste kreet, terwijl hij steeds nog in dat water staarde; was: "Jij, vergeefs beminde jongenlief!" en 't bos weerklonk van deze roep. Hij riep "Vaarwel!"; "Vaarwel!" was Echo's antwoord. Vermoeid liet hij het hoofd diep zinken in het gras; zijn ogen bleven hun meesters schoonheid drinken, tot de dood hen sloot. Zelfs in het dodenrijk bleef hij zichzelf bekijken in het water van de Styx. Zijn zusters, waternimfen, weenden en sneden zich als offer voor hun broer een haarlok af. Bosnimfen weenden mee en na hun wenen weende Echo. Brandstapel, doodsbed, hout voor fakkels, alles lag klaar, maar nergens lag zijn lichaam. Waar dat was geweest, ontdekten zij wel een gele bloem, gevat in witte bladerkrans.

## The Picture of Dorian Gray

[excerpt; final chapter]

Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray and Selected Stories*, Signet Classic, New American Library of World Literature, Inc. New York, 1962; p. 230-234.

Full text *The Picture of Dorian Gray*:

<http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/WilDori.html>

<http://contentdm.library.uvic.ca/cdm/singleitem/collection/Literary/id/2521>

It was a lovely night, so warm that he threw his coat over his arm and did not even put his silk scarf round his throat. As he strolled home, smoking his cigarette, two young men in evening dress passed him. He heard one of them whisper to the other, "That is Dorian Gray." He remembered how pleased he used to be when he was pointed out, or stared at, or talked about. He was tired of hearing his own name now. Half the charm of the little village where he had been so often lately was that no one knew who he was. He had often told the girl whom he had lured to love him that he was poor, and she had believed him. He had told her once that he was wicked, and she had laughed at him and answered that wicked people were always very old and very ugly. What a laugh she had! - just like a thrush singing. And how pretty she had been in her cotton dresses and her large hats! She knew nothing, but she had everything that he had lost.

When he reached home, he found his servant waiting up for him. He sent him to bed, and threw himself down on the sofa in the library, and began to think over some of the things that Lord Henry had said to him.

Was it really true that one could never change? He felt a wild longing for the unstained purity of his boyhood - his rose-white boyhood, as Lord Henry had once called it. He knew that he had tarnished himself, filled his mind with corruption and given horror to his fancy; that he had been an evil influence to others, and had experienced a terrible joy in being so; and that of the lives that had crossed his own, it had been the fairest and the most full of promise that he had brought to shame. But was it all irretrievable? Was there no hope for him?

Ah! in what a monstrous moment of pride and passion he had prayed that the portrait should bear the burden of his days, and he keep the unsullied splendour of eternal youth! All his failure had been due to that. Better for him that each sin of his life had brought its sure swift penalty along with it. There was purification in punishment. Not "Forgive us our sins" but "Smite us for our iniquities" should be the prayer of man to a most just God.

The curiously carved mirror that Lord Henry had given to him, so many years ago now, was standing on the table, and the white-limbed Cupids laughed round it as of old. He took it up, as he had done on that night of horror when he had first noted the change in the fatal picture, and with wild, tear-dimmed eyes looked into its polished shield. Once, some one who had terribly loved him had written to him a mad letter, ending with these idolatrous words: "The world is changed because you are made of ivory

and gold. The curves of your lips rewrite history." The phrases came back to his memory, and he repeated them over and over to himself. Then he loathed his own beauty, and flinging the mirror on the floor, crushed it into silver splinters beneath his heel. It was his beauty that had ruined him, his beauty and the youth that he had prayed for. But for those two things, his life might have been free from stain. His beauty had been to him but a mask, his youth but a mockery. What was youth at best? A green, an unripe time, a time of shallow moods, and sickly thoughts. Why had he worn its livery? Youth had spoiled him.

It was better not to think of the past. Nothing could alter that. It was of himself, and of his own future, that he had to think. James Vane was hidden in a nameless grave in Selby churchyard. Alan Campbell had shot himself one night in his laboratory, but had not revealed the secret that he had been forced to know. The excitement, such as it was, over Basil Hallward's disappearance would soon pass away. It was already waning. He was perfectly safe there. Nor, indeed, was it the death of Basil Hallward that weighed most upon his mind. It was the living death of his own soul that troubled him. Basil had painted the portrait that had marred his life. He could not forgive him that. It was the portrait that had done everything. Basil had said things to him that were unbearable, and that he had yet borne with patience. The murder had been simply the madness of a moment. As for Alan Campbell, his suicide had been his own act. He had chosen to do it. It was nothing to him.

A new life! That was what he wanted. That was what he was waiting for. Surely he had begun it already. He had spared one innocent thing, at any rate. He would never again tempt innocence. He would be good.

As he thought of Hetty Merton, he began to wonder if the portrait in the locked room had changed. Surely it was not still so horrible as it had been? Perhaps if his life became pure, he would be able to expel every sign of evil passion from the face. Perhaps the signs of evil had already gone away. He would go and look.

He took the lamp from the table and crept upstairs. As he unbarred the door, a smile of joy flitted across his strangely young-looking face and lingered for a moment about his lips. Yes, he would be good, and the hideous thing that he had hidden away would no longer be a terror to him. He felt as if the load had been lifted from him already.

He went in quietly, locking the door behind him, as was his custom, and dragged the purple hanging from the portrait. A cry of pain and indignation broke from him. He could see no change, save that in the eyes there was a look of cunning and in the mouth the curved wrinkle of the hypocrite. The thing was still loathsome - more loathsome, if possible, than before - and the scarlet dew that spotted the hand seemed brighter, and more like blood newly spilled. Then he trembled. Had it been merely vanity that had made him do his one good deed? Or the desire for a new sensation, as Lord Henry had hinted, with his mocking laugh? Or that passion to act a part that sometimes makes us do things finer than we are ourselves? Or, perhaps, all these? And why was the red stain larger than it had been? It seemed to have crept like a horrible disease over the wrinkled fingers. There was blood on the painted feet, as though the thing had dripped - blood even on the hand that had not held the knife. Confess? Did it mean that he was to confess? To give himself up and be put to death? He laughed. He felt that the idea was monstrous. Besides, even if he did confess, who would believe him? There was no trace of the murdered man anywhere. Everything belonging to him had been destroyed. He himself had burned what

had been below-stairs. The world would simply say that he was mad. They would shut him up if he persisted in his story. . . . Yet it was his duty to confess, to suffer public shame, and to make public atonement. There was a God who called upon men to tell their sins to earth as well as to heaven. Nothing that he could do would cleanse him till he had told his own sin. His sin? He shrugged his shoulders. The death of Basil Hallward seemed very little to him. He was thinking of Hetty Merton. For it was an unjust mirror, this mirror of his soul that he was looking at. Vanity? Curiosity? Hypocrisy? Had there been nothing more in his renunciation than that? There had been something more. At least he thought so. But who could tell? . . . No. There had been nothing more. Through vanity he had spared her. In hypocrisy he had worn the mask of goodness. For curiosity's sake he had tried the denial of self. He recognized that now.

But this murder - was it to dog him all his life? Was he always to be burdened by his past? Was he really to confess? Never. There was only one bit of evidence left against him. The picture itself - that was evidence. He would destroy it. Why had he kept it so long? Once it had given him pleasure to watch it changing and growing old. Of late he had felt no such pleasure. It had kept him awake at night. When he had been away, he had been filled with terror lest other eyes should look upon it. It had brought melancholy across his passions. Its mere memory had marred many moments of joy. It had been like conscience to him. Yes, it had been conscience. He would destroy it.

He looked round and saw the knife that had stabbed Basil Hallward. He had cleaned it many times, till there was no stain left upon it. It was bright, and glistened.

As it had killed the painter, so it would kill the painter's work, and all that that meant. It would kill the past, and when that was dead, he would be free. It would kill this monstrous soul-life, and without its hideous warnings, he would be at peace. He seized the thing, and stabbed the picture with it.

There was a cry heard, and a crash. The cry was so horrible in its agony that the frightened servants woke and crept out of their rooms. Two gentlemen, who were passing in the square below, stopped and looked up at the great house. They walked on till they met a policeman and brought him back. The man rang the bell several times, but there was no answer. Except for a light in one of the top windows, the house was all dark. After a time, he went away and stood in an adjoining portico and watched.

"Whose house is that, Constable?" asked the elder of the two gentlemen.

"Mr. Dorian Gray's, sir," answered the policeman.

They looked at each other, as they walked away, and sneered. One of them was Sir Henry Ashton's uncle.

Inside, in the servants' part of the house, the half-clad domestics were talking in low whispers to each other. Old Mrs. Leaf was crying and wringing her hands. Francis was as pale as death.

After about a quarter of an hour, he got the coachman and one of the footmen and crept upstairs. They knocked, but there was no reply. They called out. Everything was still. Finally, after vainly trying to force the door, they got on the roof and dropped down on to the balcony. The windows yielded easily - their bolts were old.



When they entered, they found hanging upon the wall a splendid portrait of their master as they had last seen him, in all the wonder of his exquisite youth and beauty. Lying on the floor was a dead man, in evening dress, with a knife in his heart. He was withered, wrinkled, and loathsome of visage. It was not till they had examined the rings that they recognized who it was.

### Der geraubte Schleier (oder das Märchen à la Montgolfier)

Johann Karl August Musäus, *Volksmärchen der Deutschen*, München 1976, S. 391-455.

Unfern der Stadt Zwickau, im Erzgebürge, liegt das bekannte Schwanenfeld, welches den Namen hat von einem Weiher, der Schwanenteich genannt, der heutzutage zwar beinahe versiegt aber doch noch nicht ausgetrocknet ist. Das Wasser desselben hat die Eigenschaft, die weder dem Pyrmonter Brunnen, noch dem Karlsbade, noch den Wassern zu Spaa, oder sonst einem Gesundbrunnen innerhalb Deutschland, auch selbst dem welschen Königsbade zu Pisa nicht verliehen ist. Es ist das wahre Schönheitsöl, wirksamer als die verjüngende Salbe des rätselhaften St. Aimar, kräftiger als Maientau, reinigender als Eselsmilch, oder das zur Erhaltung buhlerischer Reize erfundene Waschwasser à la Pompadour, köstlicher als das berufene Talksteinöl. Still und geräuschlos gleitet die wundersame Quelle unter dem Schatten unedler Gesträuche dahin, deren Wurzeln sie tränket, und verbirgt sich, beschämt daß ihre Kraft und Wirkung verkannt wird, bald wieder in den mütterlichen Schoß der Erde, da ihre stolze Nachbarin im Karlsbad mit vornehmen Ungestüm hervorsprudelt, sich prahlerisch durch heiße laugenhafte Dämpfe ankündigt, und von der ganzen gichtbrüchigen Welt sich panegyrisieren läßt. Es ist kein Zweifel, wenn die verborgenen Tugenden der gebürgischen Quelle, das unstete und flüchtige Gut der weiblichen Schönheit stet und fest zu machen, oder die welkende Blüte derselben wieder zu erfrischen, kund und offenbar würde, daß die weibliche werthe Christenheit mit eben der Inbrunst und dem Eifer zum Zwickauer Schönheitsbrunnen zu großem Vorteil und Gewinn der guten Stadt wallfahrten würde, wie die türkische Karawane nach Mekka zum Grabe des Propheten; auch würden die Töchter der Stadt fleißig herausgehen mit ihrem Zuber des köstlichen Wassers zu schöpfen, und so wenig ermangeln bei dieser Gelegenheit Heiratsgewerbe zu betreiben, wie vormals die Nahorittinnen. Aber wie nicht der Saum einer jeden Wolke von der Sonne vergüldet wird, nicht jede Blume, die erfrischender Morgentau tränket, hohe Farben spielt, auch nicht jede verschwitzte Perl, durch Limoniensaft gereinigt, ihr erstes Wasser wieder gewinnt, sondern bei gleicher Wirksamkeit der Lichtstrahlen, des fruchtbaren Taus und der Zitronensäure, gewisser eintretenden Umstände halber dennoch nicht immer gleiche Wirkung erfolgt: so würde nach Maßgabe angezogener Gleichnisse auch nicht jede badende Nymphe durch die Zwickauer Wunderquelle, der unbezweifelten Wirksamkeit derselben unbeschadet, Jugend und Schönheit fesseln: denn beide sind durch den nassen Weg eines Wasserbades ohnehin schwerer zu gewinnen, als durch den trocknen des Pinsels und der Schminkdose dem Auge vorzulügen.

Doch hier tritt noch der besondere Umstand ein, daß das Zwickauer Schönheitsbad seine wundersame Eigenschaft nur an solchen Damen äußert, welche, sei's auch im tausenden Gliede, aus der Sippschaft der Feien abstammen. Das sei inzwischen nicht gesagt, um irgend eine Schöne von dieser heilsamen Badekur abzuschrecken: denn welche ist versichert, daß sie geradezu in unverrückter Geschlechtsfolge von väterlicher und mütterlicher Seite aus Mutter Evens irdener Hüfte entsprossen sei, und nicht in die lange Reihe vergessener Ätermütter irgendeine Fei zwischen eintrete, und sonach ein Tropfen ätherisches Blut in ihren Adern fließe? Ist immer möglich, daß der unermüdete Forschungsgeist der Menschenkunde, in dem Menschenantlitz ein Feenprofil ausspähet, wie er bereits eine Königslinie geahndet, und ein Armensünderprofil gefunden hat. Bis dahin können vielleicht andere Merkzeichen die Stelle der zu hoffenden gewissen Überzeugung vertreten. Jedes zauberische Talent der Töchter Teutoniens, es sei dieses der Wohlgestalt des Wuchses, dem Blick der Augen, der Eurhythmie des Mundes, der Wölbung des Busens, den Organen der Stimme verliehen; oder es bestehe in der Gabe eines bezaubernden Witzes, oder einer gewissen Kunstfertigkeit, läßt ein Erbteil aus dem

großmütterlichen Feenschatz vermuten, und wo ist ein Mädchen, das nicht irgend so ein Zauberkünstchen treiben sollte? Die Wallfahrt ins Zwickauer Schönheitskonservatorium wär drum des Weges wohl wert, und insonderheit der Teil der schönern Welt dazu aufzumuntern, welchem das Schicksal bevorstehet, die Flagge der Schönheit des nächsten zu streichen.

Im Angesicht des kleinen Sees, in welchen die magische Quelle ihren Silberstrom ergoß, wohnte an dem sanften Abhange eines Hügels, in einer lustigen Felsengrotte, Benno, der fromme Einsiedler, der den Namen von dem bekannten frommen Bischof in Meißen, zum Aushängeschild seiner Tugend und Frömmigkeit entlehnt hatte, und nicht minder im Geruch der Heiligkeit stund als sein Namenspatron. Niemand wußte zu sagen, wer Benno eigentlich sei, noch von wannen er kommen war. Vor langen Jahren langte er als ein rüstiger Pilger an, ließ sich in der Gegend des Schwanenfeldes<sup>1</sup> nieder, erbaute eigenhändig eine artige Einsiedelei, pflanzte einen kleinen Garten umher, in welchem er die herrlichste Baumschule von ausländischen Obstbäumen und Traubengeländer anlegte. Er zog darinnen auch süße Melonen, welche damals für eine große Leckerei gehalten wurden, und womit er die Gäste, welche bei ihm einsprachen, bewirtete und labte. Seine Gastfreiheit machte ihn ebenso beliebt, als seine heitre Gemütsart. Die gebürgischen Einwohner wendeten sich wegen seiner Frömmigkeit an ihn, als einen Anwalt und Unterhändler bei allerlei Notdurft vor dem himmlischen Tribunal, und er gewährte seine Vorsprache oft ganz entgegengesetzten Wünschen mit großer Bereitwilligkeit, ohne die Gebühr eines reichen Almosens. Gleichwohl fehlte es ihm an keinem Bedürfnis des Lebens, vielmehr gab ihm der Segen des Himmels an allem Überfluß. Ob indessen den frommen Benno ein himmlischer Beruf aus dem Geräusche der Welt in seine einsame Klausur trieb, oder ob ihm wie dem frommen Abälard eine Heloise zum kontemplativen Leben Beruf und Neigung gab, das wird sich vielleicht in der Folge veroffenbaren.

Um die Zeit, als Markgraf Friedrich mit dem Biß, seine Fehde mit dem Kaiser Albert ausfocht, und das Schwabenheer das Osterland verheerte, hatte bereits das Alter den ehrwürdigen Benno mit einer ansehnlichen Glatze geschmückt, und die Überbleibsel seines Haarwuchses an der Stirn gebleicht, er ging krumm und sehr gebückt an seinem Stabe einher, und hatte nicht mehr die Kräfte seinen Garten im Frühling umzugraben, wünschte sich einen Gehülften und Beistand; aber die Wahl fiel ihm schwer, im Gebürge einen Hausgenossen zu finden der ihm zu Sinne war, denn das Alter machte ihn mißtraulich und wunderlich. Unverhofft gewährte ihn der Zufall seines Wunsches, und ließ ihn einen Gehülften finden, an den er sich wie an seinen Stab halten konnte. Die Meißner hatten bei Lucka die Schwaben in einer großen Schlacht erlegt, und ihrer bei sechzig Schock erschlagen<sup>2</sup>. Ein panisches Schrecken fiel auf das Schwabenheer, die Furcht gab ihnen die gewöhnliche Losung: rette sich wer kann! Jeder der nach der Schlacht noch ein Paar gesunde Füße unter sich fühlte, dankte Gott und allen Heiligen dafür, und bediente sich derselben wie die aufgeschreckten Lerchen der Flügel, sich über die betrüglichen Garnwände empor zu schwingen und den Netzen des Todes zu entrinnen; viele flohen nach den nächsten Wäldern und die Ermatteten verbargen sich in hohle Weiden. Eine getreue Spießgenossenschaft, sieben Mann an der Zahl, gelobten sich, treulich beieinander auszuhalten, sich nicht zu trennen und zusammen zu leben und zu sterben. Es gelang ihnen dem nachhauenden Feinde glücklich zu entkommen, sie waren insgesamt frische wohlbewadete Pursche, die kein Läufer aus Midian würde eingeholet haben. Endlich ermüdeten sie doch durch den allzulangen Wettlauf, und da die Nacht hereinbrach, beratschlagten sie sich, wo sie einen Ort finden möchten sich zu verbergen. Im freien Felde hielten sie sich nicht sicher genug, sie faßten also den Entschluß in ein einsames Dorf sich zu schleichen, das ihnen eben aufstieß, denn sie urteilten ganz recht, daß die Mannschaft daraus mit ins meißnische Lager gezogen sei. Dennoch waren sie sehr behutsam, und um das strengste Inkognito zu beobachten,

nahmen die sieben Helden in einem Backofen ihre Herberge, ihre Anwesenheit desto sicherer zu verhehlen. Nun mag wohl ein Backofen eben nicht das bequemste Gastbette sein, und vor der Lucker Schlacht würden sie auch mit einem solchen Nachtquartier schwerlich vorlieb genommen haben, denn tausend Heringe schlafen leicht friedlicher in einer Tonne beisammen als sieben Soldaten in einem Backofen; aber diesmal machte die Not Quartier, die große Ermattung gebot Eintracht und der Schlaf Schweigen: es fiel ein Paar Augen nach dem andern zu und die Unglückskameradschaft schlief bis an den hellen Tag, ob sie gleich verabredet hatten in der Morgendämmerung in aller Stille zu dekamieren.

Aber ehe die Siebenschläfer erwachten waren sie bereits von einer Bäuerin entdeckt worden, die, weil das Gerücht des Sieges schon ins Land erschollen war, aus großer Freude über diese Botschaft einen Kuchen eingemengt hatte, den sie in aller Frühe backen wollte. Wie sie zum Ofen kam und die Einquartierung da wahrnahm, merkte sie bald an den zerfetzten Wämsern und Hosen, daß diese fremden Gäste Flüchtlinge wären, sie lief also flugs ins Dorf und sagte ihren Nachbarinnen an. Augenblicks versammelte sich die Schar der Bäuerinnen, gerüstet mit Bratspießen und Ofengabeln, nicht anders als wenn sie in der ersten Maiennacht den Besen satteln und auf den Brocken ziehen wollten. Der Backofen wurde von der weiblichen Kohorte förmlich berennt, man hielt Kriegsrat, ob man mit gewaffneter Faust oder mit dem Element des Feuers den Feind angreifen wollte, denn beschlossen war es die Schmach der Jungfrauen und Weiber an den schändlichen Buhlern zu rächen, die bei dem Einfall ins Land weder die Heiligkeit der Klöster noch die Zucht der tugendsamen Hausmütter und ihrer Töchter verschonet hatten. Ob nun wohl die sieben Märtyrer an der Sünde ihrer Landsleute vielleicht sehr unschuldig waren, so sollten sie doch für sie die Schuld abbüßen: die strenge Keuschheitskommission verurteilte sie nach gepflogener Rate allesamt zum Bratspieß. Schon schwang der Geist der Rache die ungewohnten Waffen in der Hand der Dörferinnen, nicht anders als Bacchantenwut den schweren Thyrsus in der Hand der Dyaden. Der ganze Haufe stürmte einmütig auf die Heldenherberge ein, ohne die Unverletzbarkeit des Gastrechtes zu respektieren; die wehrlosen Wichte wurden mit kräftigen Stößen und Gabelstichen gar unsanft aus dem erquickenden Schlafe geweckt. Sie ahndeten aus diesem unfreundlichen Morgengruße ihre Gefahr, stimmten große Lamenten an, kapitulierten aus dem Ofen heraus und baten flehentlich um ihr Leben. Doch die unerbittlichen Amazonen gaben kein Quartier, stachen und gabelten so behende von außen in den Mordkeller hinein, bis eine völlige Totenstille darin herrschte und keiner der unglücklichen Spießgesellen mehr ein Glied regte; hierauf verwahrten sie die Tür von außen und zogen triumphierend im Dorfe umher<sup>3</sup>.

Sechse von der verbündeten Kameradschaft waren bei diesem Ofenscharmützel wirklich auf dem Platze geblieben, dem siebenten, der klüger oder entschlossener war als die übrigen, gab die Gefahr ein sicheres Rettungsmittel an die Hand; er nahm in Zeiten eine weise Retirade in die Feuermauer, stieg durch solche unbemerkt aus dem schauervollen Kerker, gleitete vom Dach herunter und gelangte ins Freie, lief aus allen Kräften dem nahen Gebüsch zu, und wanderte so unter fortwährender Todesfurcht den ganzen Tag in der Irre herum bis zu Sonnenuntergang. Vor Entkräftung und Hunger sank er unter einen Feldbaum, und nachdem die Abendkühlung seine Kräfte erfrischt hatte, hob er die Augen auf und sahe in einer kleinen Entfernung einen andächtigen Eremiten, der vor einem sehr simplifizierten Kreuz das nur mit Baumbast zusammengebunden war, seine Andacht verrichtete. Dieser fromme Anblick machte ihm Mut, er nähete in einer demütigen Stellung dem ehrwürdigen Ordensmanne, kniete sich hinter ihn, und da dieser sein Gebet vollendet hatte, erteilte er dem Fremdling den Segen. Wie er aber diesen so bleich und entstellt sahe, auch aus seiner Kleidung urteilte, daß er ein Lanzknecht oder Schildknappe sei, ließ er sich mit ihm ins Gespräch ein. Der ehrliche Schwab vertraute ihm seinen Unstern so treuherzig, als ob er seine Beichte ansagte, ohne seine Furcht für dem Tode zu verhehlen,

denn er fürchtete immer der Würgengel mit der Bratspießsense bewaffnet, folge ihm auf dem Fuße nach, und werde ihn noch bald genug einholen. Den gutmütigen Einsiedler jammerte das unschuldige Schwabenblut, er bot ihm Schutz und Obdach in seiner Wohnung an, zwar bildete dem furchtsamen Flüchtling seine verworrene Phantasie gleich beim ersten Eintritt die düstre Grotte als einen Mordkeller ab; nicht nur dieses Felsengewölbe, sondern auch die Kapelle, die Speisekammer, der Keller des Einsiedlers, ja selbst das azurne Gewölbe des Himmels, gewann in seinen Augen die Gestalt eines Backofens; es überlief ihn ein kalter Totenschauer nach dem andern. Aber der freundliche Greis sprach ihm bald wieder Mut ein, reichte ihm Wasser die Füße zu waschen, tischte ihm gutes Brot und einige Gartenfrüchte zur Abendmahlzeit auf, labte seine trockne Zunge die an dem Gaumen klebte mit einem Becher Wein, und bereitete ihm ein Nachtlager von weichem Moos. Friedbert der Schwab schlief auf beiden Ohren, bis ihn der fromme Benno zum Gebet weckte, worauf er beim Frühstück aller Not und Herzeleids vergaß und nicht Worte hatte seinem guten Wirt für die menschenfreundliche Aufnahme und Pflege sattsam zu danken.

Nach drei Tagen dünkte es ihm Zeit förder zu ziehen; doch sehnte er sich aus diesem ruhigen und sichern Aufenthalte so wenig hinweg, als es einem Schiffer, der beim Sturm in einer windsichern Bucht den Anker hat fallen lassen, lüstet, sich in die offene See zu wagen, solange noch die Winde draußen heulen und die hohlen Wellen brausen. Benno seinerseits fand an dem ehrlichen Schwaben einen so schlichten und geraden Sinn, so viel Treuherzigkeit und Dienstbeflissenheit, daß er ihn stets bei sich zu behalten wünschte. Diese Übereinstimmung des Willens machte bald beide Teile des Handels einig; Friedbert nahm von dem Altvater die Tonsur, wechselte das Soldatenkleid mit einem Eremitenrock, und blieb als dienender Bruder in der Klausur, seines Wohltäters zu warten, die Küche und den Garten zu beschicken und die nach der Einsiedelei wallfahrtenden Pilger zu bedienen. Um die Zeit der Sonnenwende, wenn der Frühling von dem Sommer sich scheidet, und die Sonne in das Zeichen des Krebs tritt, verfehlte Benno nie, seinen treuen Diener auf Kundschaft an den Weiher zu schicken, um zu sehen ob sich Schwäne darauf blicken ließen, ihren Flug zu beobachten, und die Anzahl derselben zu bemerken. Er schien immer auf diesen Bericht sehr aufmerksam, der Schwanenbesuch machte ihn gutes Muts, aber wenn sich um die gewöhnliche Zeit keine Schwäne blicken ließen, schüttelte der Alte den Kopf und blieb einige Tage mißmütig und grämisch. Der geradsinnige Schwabekopf hatte keinen Arg daraus, forschte entweder dieser sonderbaren Neugierde des Grüblers nicht weiter nach, oder meinte die Ankunft oder Abwesenheit der Schwäne sei eine Vorbedeutung von Fruchtbarkeit oder Unfruchtbarkeit des Jahres.

Eines Tages da Friedbert auf der Lauer stand, in der Abenddämmerung einige Schwäne über den Teich hatte hinschweben sehn, und solches nach Gewohnheit dem Vater Benno ansagte, bezeigte dieser große Freude darüber, ließ eine leckerhafte Abendmahlzeit zurichten, und Wein auftragen vollauf. Der jovialische Becher äußerte bald seine belebenden Kräfte an beiden fröhlichen Tischgenossen. Der ehrwürdige Greis legte seine Ernsthaftigkeit ganz ab, wurde gesprächich und scherzhaft, schwatzte von Traubensaft und Minneglück, daß wer ihn gehört hätte würde vermutet haben, der Greis von Tejos sei wieder aufgelebt, und habe sich in einen Eremiten umgewandelt. Er stimmte sogar das antike Trinklied an, das seitdem Trauben gekeltert und Mädchen sind geliebt worden, üblich gewesen ist, und welches Vater Weiße seinen Zeitgenossen wieder sangbar gemacht hat: »Ohne Lieb und ohne Wein was wär unser Leben.« Indem er seinem Pflegesohne den vollen Becher reichte und dieser redlich Bescheid tat, trat er ihn traulich mit diesen Worten an: »Mein Sohn gib mir Antwort auf eine Frage an dein Herz, aber gebiete ihm, daß es kein Schalk sei oder dich selbst betrüge; auch bezähme deine Zunge, daß kein verlognes Wort darüber gleite: denn so du erfunden würdest, daß du trüglich redetest, würde die Lüge

deine Zunge schwärzen, wie der Ruß einen Topf am Feuerherde. Darum sag mir aufrichtig und sonder Trug, ist Frauenliebe je in dein Herz kommen und der süße Minnetrieb darinnen erwacht; oder schlafen noch die Gefühle zarter Leidenschaft in deiner Seele? Hast du den Honigbecher keuscher Brunst gekostet, oder aus dem üppichen Kelch der Wollust getrunken? Nährt du noch vielleicht geheime Liebesflammen mit dem Hoffnungsöle, oder sind sie durch den Hauch des Wankelmuts erkaltet und erloschen, oder glimmt noch ein verborgener Funke unter der Asche der Eifersucht? Seufzet eine Dirne nach dir, die deinen Augen gefiel, und dich jetzt als einen Toten beweinet, oder deiner Wiederkehr ins Vaterland harret mit sehnllichem Verlangen? Schleuß mir auf die Geheimnisse deines Herzens, so soll sich das meinige gegen dich öffnen, daß ich dir kund tue was dir lieb zu hören sein wird.«

»Ehrwürdiger Vater«, antwortete der truglose Schwab, »was mein Herz anbelanget, so wisset, daß es nie der Liebe Fesseln getragen hat, und annoch so frei ist, als der Vogel in der Luft von den Netzen des Vogelstellers. Ich bin als ein junger Gesell unter Kaiser Alberts Fahnen gezwungen worden eine Lanze zu tragen, ehe noch das Milchhaar am Kinn sich zum männlichen Krausbarte krümmte, und die Dirnen meiner achteten; denn die Gelbschnäbel, wißt ihr wohl, sind bei ihnen nicht hoch am Brette<sup>t</sup>. Zudem bin ich ein verzagter Tropf in betreff der Liebe; wenn mich's auch zuweilen lüstete zu liebäugeln, hatt ich kein Herz einer feinen Dirne dreust unter die Augen zu sehen, und es ist mir nie begegnet, daß mir eine mit Liebe entgegen gekommen wär, um durch einen Wink oder Blick mich anzukörnen. Also wüßt ich nicht daß eine weibliche Zähre um mich geflossen sei, ausgenommen die meine Mutter und Schwestern weinten, da ich ins Heer zog.« Das vernahm der Alte gern und fuhr also fort: »Du hast mir nun drei Jahre lang aufgewartet wie es einem ehrlichen Diener zustehet, dafür gebührt dir ein billiger Lohn, von dem ich wünschte, daß du ihn aus der Hand der Liebe empfindest, wofern dir anders das Glück günstiger ist als mir. Wisse, daß mich nicht die Andacht, sondern die Liebe, aus fernen Landen hieher in diese Klause geführt hat. Vernimm meine Abenteuer und die Abenteuer des Weiher, der dort als ein Silbermeer in dieser mondlichten Nacht vor unsern Augen hingegossen ist. In meiner Jugend war ich ein kecker männlicher Ritter, seßhaft in Helvetien, aus dem Geschlecht der Grafen von Kyburg, trieb Kurzweil und Minnespiel, und erschlug einen Pfaffen der mir eine feine Magd abgewonnen hatte durch Betrug, daß sie mir untreu ward. Drauf zog ich gen Rom, Ablaß zu holen vom Heiligen Vater des Totschlags halber, der legte mir eine Buße auf, daß ich drei Kreuzzüge tun sollte ins Heilige Land, gegen die Sarazenen zu streiten, mit dem Beding, daß, wenn ich nicht wieder heimkehrte, der heiligen Kirche all mein Gut sollte verfallen sein. Ich verdang mich auf eine der Venediger Galeeren und schiffte frohen Mutes davon. Aber im Ionischen Meere blies der tückische Afrikaner-Wind in unsre Segel, das Meer türmte sich auf, unser Schiffelein ward ein Spiel der Wellen und lief auf dem Ägäer-See nahe bei der Insel Naxos auf eine verborgene Klippe daß es zu Trümmern ging. Ob ich gleich der Schwimmkunst unkundig war, faßte mich doch mein Schutzengel beim Schopf und hielt mich über Wasser, daß ich das Land erreichte, wo mich die Strandbewohner freundlich aufnahmen und meiner pflegten, bis ich des eingeschluckten Seewassers mich entlediget hatte. Drauf begab ich mich nach Quisa ans Hoflager des Fürsten Zeno eines Abkömmlings des Markus Sanuto, welchem Kaiser Heinrich aus Schwaben die Zykladen als ein Herzogtum verliehen hatte, und wurde unter dem Namen eines welschen Ritters wohl empfangen.

Hier sah ich die schlanke Zoe seine Gemahlin, von dem schönsten griechischen Ebenmaß, die Apelles würde gewählt haben, die Göttin der Liebe zu konterfeien. Ihr Anblick entzündete eine Flamme in meinem Herzen, in welcher alle andere Gedanken und Begierden mit aufloderten. Ich vergaß meiner Gelübde der Kreuzfahrt ins Heilige Land, und mein Dichten und Trachten war nur darauf gestellt, der jungen Fürstin meine Liebe zu verständigen. Bei jedem Speerrennen tat ich mich hervor, denn die

weichlichen Griechen kamen mir weder an Kräften noch an Behendigkeit bei. Ich unterließ nicht, durch tausend kleine Aufmerksamkeiten, die uns Männern so leicht das weibliche Herz gewinnen, der reizenden Zoe mich anzuschmeicheln. Mit Sorgfalt spähetete ich durch meine Kundschafter wie sie sich an jedem Hoffeste kleiden würde, die Farbe ihres Gewandes war immer die meiner Feldbinde und Helmdecke. Sie liebte Sang und Saitenspiel auch muntere Reihentänze, tanzte selbst zum Entzücken wie die Tochter der Herodias; ich überraschte sie oft mit einer Serenade, wenn sie des Abends unter dem heitern griechischen Himmel auf der Terrasse ihres Blumengartens am Meer lustwandelte, und die kleinen Silberwellen am Strande das freundliche Flüstern traulicher Seelen nachahmten. Ich ließ aus Morea Tänzer-Banden kommen sie zu belustigen, und trieb nicht wenig Verkehr mit den Modehändlerinnen zu Konstantinopel, die Erfindungen des weiblichen Putzes nach dem neuesten Geschmack der Kaiserstadt aus der ersten Hand zu empfangen, und sie auf mancherlei Wegen zu der Dame meines Herzens gelangen zu lassen, doch so daß sie leicht den Urheber dieser Galanterien erraten konnte.

Wenn du in der Liebe einige Erfahrung hättest, mein Sohn, so würdest du wissen, daß solche dem Anschein nach unbedeutende Gefälligkeiten, in der artigen Welt Hieroglyphen sind, die der Unkundige für Spielwerk und Tändelei erklärt, die aber bestimmten Sinn und Deutsamkeit so gut haben als Buchstaben und Worte in der gemeinen Sprache, das heißt, sie sind eine Art rotwelscher Sprache, die ihrer zwei, die sich darauf verstehen, im Beisein eines Dritten reden können, ohne daß dieser weiß ob er verraten oder verkauft ist, die Liebenden verstehn aber alle Worte, ohne eines Unterrichts oder einer Erklärung zu bedürfen. Diese meine Stummen, die ich ins Innre des Palasts schickte, sprachen daselbst sehr laut zu meinem Vorteil; ich bemerkte mit Entzücken, daß mich die schönen Augen der Fürstin im Gewühl der Höflinge um sie her zuweilen aufzusuchen und mir viel Verbindliches zu sagen schienen. Dadurch wurde ich dreuster in meinen Anschlägen; ich fand eine Vertraute unter ihrem Frauenzimmer, die sich gegen die Gebühr zur Botschafterin der Liebe dinge ließ. Es kam zu wechselseitigen Erklärungen, es wurden geheime Zusammenkünfte unter vier Augen verabredet, die jedoch immer mißglückten: ein kleiner Umstand zerstörte jedesmal den Plan, welchen die Liebe entworfen hatte; entweder fand ich meine Prinzessin da nicht, wo sie mich hinbeschieden hatte, oder der Ort, wo ich sie treffen sollte, war mir unzugänglich. Dämon Eifersucht hielt die schöne Griechin in so engem Gewahrsam, daß ich ihres Anblicks nie anders als im Angesicht des ganzen Hofes genießen konnte. An diesen Schwierigkeiten zerschellten, wie an einer ehernen Mauer, meine Hoffnung und Wünsche, aber nicht die Leidenschaft, welche als eine hungrige Wölfin immer gieriger wurde, je weniger sie Nahrung fand. Die lodernde Flamme verzehrte das Mark in meinen Gebeinen, die Wangen erbleichten, meine Lenden verdorreten, mein Gang wurde unstet, denn die Kniee wankten wie ein leichtes Schilfrohr, das der Wind hin und her beuget. Bei all diesem Ungemach fehlte mir ein treuer Freund, in dessen verschwiegenen Busen ich meinen Kummer hätte ausschütten können, und der zum mindesten mit täuschender Hoffnung meinen ermatteten Geist wieder belebt hätte.

Als ich nun so siech in meiner Herberge lag, und mich des Lebens verziehen hatte, ließ mich der Fürst durch seinen Leibarzt Theophrast besuchen, dem er die Sorge für meine Genesung anbefohlen hatte. Ich reichte ihm die Hand, in Meinung daß er den Puls prüfen wollte, er schüttelte sie aber mit freundlichem Lächeln, ohne sich um die Reizbarkeit meiner Nerven zu bekümmern, und sprach: ›Vermeinet nicht, edler Ritter, daß ich gekommen bin, durch Salben und Latwergen Eure Genesung zu befördern nach Art unkundiger Ärzte, die auf den tauben Dunst<sup>5</sup> kurieren; Eure Gesundheit ist auf den Fittichen der Liebe entflohen, sie kann auch nur auf denselben zurückkehren.‹ Ich wunderte mich baß, daß Meister Theophrast so genauen Bescheid um die Geheimnisse meines Herzens wußte, als wenn er's mit dem

anatomischen Messer zerlegt hätte, und als ein Opferpriester daraus wahr sagte. Also verhehlt ich ihm nichts von dem was er bereits wußte, und fügte noch gar trübselig hinzu: ›Wie soll ich von der Liebe Genesung hoffen, die mich tückisch mit einem Bande umschlungen hat, in welchem bereits der unauflöbliche Knoten zugezogen ist? Es bleibt mir nichts übrig als mich in mein Schicksal zu ergeben, und in der trüglichen Schlinge zu erwürgen.‹ ›Mit nichten‹, versetzte er, ›Liebe ohne Hoffnung ist freilich bitterer als der Tod; aber laßt Eure Hoffnung darum nicht schwinden. Es begibt sich nichts Neues unter der Sonnen, was sich aber schon begeben hat, das kann sich auch wieder begeben. Der magre Tithon hatte sich nicht träumen lassen, daß er in dem Bette der Morgenröte schlafen würde, dennoch hat er sich in den Armen der Göttin so abgeliebt, daß endlich seine ganze Korpulenz zur Schöpfung einer Heuschrecke kaum hinreichte. Da der Hirtenknabe auf dem Berg Ida seinen Schafen das dürre Gras hinunterschälmeite, ahndete er nichts davon, daß er die schöne Spartanerin dem sorglosen Menelaus entreißen, und als eine Liebesbeute davonführen würde; und was war der Ritter Anchises mehr als Ihr? Dennoch erhielt er bei der schönsten der Göttinnen des Himmels über den rüstigen Kriegsgott den Preis, und der sterbliche Krieger stach den unsterblichen Feldherrn bei ihr aus.‹ So philosophierte mir der Arzt meinen Kummer aus dem Herzen heraus; die Worte seines Mundes gingen mir glatt ein, und war für mich mehr Würze und Heilkraft darin als in den Büchsen der Apotheker. Bald nach meiner Genesung trieb ich wieder das alte Spiel, und es gewann das Ansehen, als wenn mein Glück jetzt bei beßrer Laune sei. Der Arzt Theophrast wurde mein Busenfreund, der Vertraute und Unterhändler meiner Liebe. Die schöne Zoe hinterging die Wachsamkeit ihrer Hüter, es gelang mir die eherne Mauer der vormaligen Schwierigkeiten ohne Schwierigkeit zu überspringen, und ich fand die so lang gewünschte Gelegenheit sie unter vier Augen zu sprechen in der Jasminlaube ihres Lustgartens. Das Entzücken, welches ich fühlte, dem Ziele meiner Wünsche so nahe zu sein, goß eine Wonne in meine Seele die über alle sterblichen Empfindungen hinaus reicht. Ich stürzte ganz von Liebe begeistert zu ihren Füßen und ergriff ihre schwanenweiße Hand, die ich mit stummer Inbrunst an die Lippen drückte, indem ich meinen Geist sammelte ihr das Geständnis der Liebe zu tun. Aber der schlaue Dynast hatte alle meine Schritte beobachtet, brütete schon lange Zeit über einem Basilisken-Eie, und ließ mich in die Falle eingehen, die er mit Hinterlist mir zubereitet hatte. Eine Schar von der Leibwache des Fürsten drang aus einem Hinterhalte hervor, und riß mich gewaltsam aus den Armen der schönen Zoe, die sie mit ängstlicher Bewegung ausbreitete, mich in Schutz zu nehmen. Doch das Schrecken des fürchterlichen Überfalls bemächtigte sich ihrer Sinnen bei dem Geklirr der Waffen, ihre Lebensgeister schwanden dahin, die Rosen ihrer Wangen erbleichten und sie sank mit einem stöhnenden Seufzer ohnmächtig auf einen Sofa zurück.

Ringsum mit dem Meere umflossen, liegt auf einem steilen Felsen ein fester Turm, von der Insul nur einen Steinwurf entfernt, und allein durch eine mit Wache besetzte Zugbrücke zugänglich. Im heidnischen Zeit alter hatte hier die Freude gewohnt: diese Ruine war vormals ein berühmter Tempel gewesen, wo der Freudengeber Bacchus verehrt wurde<sup>6</sup>. Diesen heidnischen Greuel hatte die christliche Liebe in einen Hungerturm verwandelt, wo Heulen und Zähnklappen innen wohnte. Die unglücklichen Schlachtopfer der Despotenwut fanden hier den unvermeidlichen Untergang. Ich wurde gezwungen in dieses schändliche Verlies auf einer endlosen Leiter hinabzusteigen, welche, sobald mein Fuß den Abgrund berührt hatte, wieder zurückgenommen wurde. Ägyptische Finsternis herrschte in dem tiefen Mordkeller und leichenhafter Geruch umnebelte meine Sinnen. Ich wurde bald inne, daß ich mich am Eingange des Reichs der Toten befand, denn ich strauchelte bald an einem Beingerippe, bald an einem halbverweseten Körper, da ich mir einen Platz zu meinem Sterbelager aussuchte. Voll Verzweiflung bettete ich mich auf das harte Steinpflaster und rief den Tod, daß er mich bald von den Qualen des Lebens befreien möchte; er schickte aber diesmal seinen Bruder den Schlaf, der mich eine Zeitlang



meines Elends vergessen machte. Beim Erwachen sah ich zu meiner Verwunderung eine Hellung in der Höhle, und als ich umschaute was es sei, erblickte ich eine brennende Ampel in der Mitte der Totenkammer, auf einem Henkelkorbe, der von oben an einer Schnur schien herabgelassen zu sein. Ich untersuchte was darinnen sei, und fand ihn mit allerlei Eßwaren, nebst einigen Flaschen Chierwein beladen, und einem Ölkrug, das Licht zu unterhalten. Ob mir nun gleich die Lampe alle Schrecknisse des schauervollen Kerkers versichtbarte, so bekämpfte doch die Empfindung des Hungers bald die des Eckels; ich schob flugs einige Beingerippe zusammen, und bereitete mir daraus einen Tisch und Sessel, setzte mich zum Korbe und tat eine Mahlzeit wie ein Totengräber, der vor dem Frühstück ein Grab ausgeworfen hat.

Nach einigen Tagen wie mich bedünkte, denn die Zeit hatte in dem unterirdischen Käfig bleierne Flügel, vernahm ich über mir ein Getöse, die Leiter mit den zahllosen Sprossen rollte herab, ich sahe einen Mann daran heruntergleiten, den ich entweder für einen Unglückskameraden oder für einen Schergen hielt. Meine Freude war meiner Verwunderung gleich, da ich den Arzt Theophrast erkannte, dessen Stimme mir in der Totengruft so lieblich in die Ohren tönte, als der Schall der letzten Posaune, welcher die Toten aus den Gräbern hervorrufen wird. Freund Theophrast umarmte mich herzlich und tat mir die Absicht seiner Botschaft kund, indem er mir gebot, ihm zu folgen. Er sprach ganz lakonisch und verweilte unten nicht lange, weil ihm die mephitische Luft in dem Höllenschlunde nicht behagen mochte. Vermutlich war ich der erste, dessen Fußtapfen aus der Höhle des Löwen rückwärtsgingen. Unter der Geleitschaft meines guten Engels gelangte ich in seiner Wohnung an, wo er mir das Geheimnis meiner wunderbaren Befreiung eröffnete. »Danket Eurem Schicksal und der Macht der Liebe«, sprach er, »daß Ihr diesmal dem schmachlichen Hungertode entronnen seid. Fliehet eilig aus dem Zauberkreise der Zykladen, ehe Euch der Ausgang aus diesem gefahrvollen Labyrinth auf ewig verschlossen wird. Ein eifersüchtiger Fürst ist mehr denn Argus und Briareus; er hat hundert Augen Euch zu beobachten und hundert Hände Euch zu greifen. Zeno ist der verliebteste Ehemann, aber der rachgierigste Feind; in seinen Adern fließt Tigerblut, doch die Fesseln der Liebe fesseln seinen wütigen Sinn, darum rächt er Amors Schalkheiten streng an den Paladins der schönen Zoe und nie an ihr. Euer Los würde das nämliche Eurer Vorgänger im Turm gewesen sein, wenn sie nicht für Euch mehr empfunden hätte als für alle übrigen, die für sie ausgelitten und ausgehungert haben. Sie erbot sich, ihre Unschuld und Eure Tugend durch die Feuerprobe zu erhärten, und verlangte dreust Eure Befreiung aus dem Mordkeller. Wie ihr aber der Fürst diese ziemliche Bitte auf eine schnöde Art versagte, ging sie mit trauriger Gebärde von ihm, und gelobte sich mit einem teuren Eide, von Stund an keine Speise mehr anzurühren, um mit Euch, Herr Ritter, gleiches Todes zu sterben. Das ließ sich der hartherzige Gemahl wenig anfechten und zog auf die Jagd; sie nutzte seine Abwesenheit die Turmwache zu bestechen, und Euch mit Speise nach Notdurft versorgen zu lassen, ob sie gleich selbst, ihrer Gelübde getreu, sich aller Nahrung enthielt. Nach drei Tagen wurde dem Fürsten angesagt, daß die lederfarbene Bleichsucht an den Rosenwangen seiner Gemahlin zehre, und die Fackel des Lebens in ihren himmlischen Augen zu erleschen beginne. Das bekümmerte ihn in der Seele, er flog reumütig zu ihren Füßen, und beschwor sie, von dem Entschlusse abzustehen ihre Schönheit zu vernichten und aus der Welt zu scheiden. Er gewährte ihr die Bitte um Euer Leben, doch mit dem Beding, daß Ihr aus Naxos auswandern sollt, wie Vater Adam aus dem Paradies, ohne jemals die Rückkehr zu versuchen. Der Fürst befahl mir die Gesundheitspflege der schönen Zoe, und sie die Sorge für Eure Befreiung an. Also rüstet Euch zum schleunigen Abzuge; es liegt ein Schiff bereit nach dem Hellespont, das Euch sicher ans feste Land bringen wird.«

Als er seine Rede geendet hatte, umhalste ich den biedern Arzt und dankte ihm meine Errettung mit freundlichen Worten. Aber der Abschied von Naxos lag mir gleichwohl schwer auf dem Herzen. Die Reize der schönen Zoe hatten mich also bezaubert, daß es mir leichter schien aus dem Leben als von ihr zu scheiden. »Freund«, sprach ich, »Eure letzten Worte sind mir eine Botschaft des Todes. Habt Ihr mich nicht selbst belehrt, Liebe ohne Hoffnung sei bitterer als der Tod? Hättet Ihr mich immer in dem Hungerturme verschmachten lassen, so wär ich dieses elenden Lebens quitt, das mir zur Qual wird, wenn ich meine Buhlschaft auf ewig meiden soll. Laßt mich eines ehrlichen und ritterlichen Todes sterben. Sagt dem Fürsten unverhohlen, daß ich die schöne Zoe zur Dame meines Herzens erkoren habe, und bereit bin das durch einen ritterlichen Kampf auf Tod und Leben zu erhärten. Und dieweil ich sie doch nimmer zur Beute erlangen kann, will ich um sie gegen seine Ritterschaft kämpfen bis ich erliege unter dem Waffenkampf, damit sie mir im Verborgenen ein mildes Zährlein weine.« Freund Theophrast schüttelte sein ehrwürdiges Haupt, und lächelte mich an, wie ein Arzt den Kranken anlächelt, dem die Fieberhitze das Hirn verwirrt. »Euer Beginnen ist Torheit«, erwiderte er, »ein wackrer Rittersmann muß nicht kämpfen um überwunden zu werden, sondern obzusiegen und Lob und Ehre dadurch zu erringen. Überdem dünkt mich, werde der Fürst Eure angebotene Fehde nicht nach den Gesetzen der Ritterschaft, sondern der Eifersucht richten, und Euch ohne Zeitverlust wieder nach dem Vorhof des Orkus schicken. Dieweil aber Liebe mächtiger ist als der Tod, und ich vermerke daß Eure Leidenschaft über die Vernunft siege, weshalb nichts von der schönen Zoe Euch abwendig machen kann: will ich einen Tropfen von dem Lebenstau der Hoffnung abermal in Euer Herz träufeln, der Euch zwar nicht heilen aber doch erquicken wird. Vernehmet ein Geheimnis das nur wenig Weltweisen offenbar ist, und welches mir nicht Lohn noch Gewinn entreißen würde, wo nicht Freundschaft und Mitleid mit Eurem Zustande das Siegel der Verschwiegenheit lösete. Die von Euch angebetete Zoe stammt, wie mehrere unserer griechischen und andere Schönheiten aus allerlei Nationen, von der Sippschaft der Feien ab, und nur zur Halbscheid aus sterblichem Geblüt. Die alten Volkssagen von einem Göttergeschlecht, das ehemals in Griechenland hauset, ist kein Traum der Phantasei, obwohl die Poeten viel Fabelei und Lüge dreingemengt haben, daß Wahrheit und Irrtum nun schwerer voneinander zu scheiden ist, als reines Silber, wenn es sich mit dem Spießglas verschlackt hat; gleichwohl ist das Silber in der Schlacke enthalten, und dem Verständigen kennbar. Die Götterprosapie ist nichts anders als eine Gattung ätherischer Luftgeister, welche die obern Regionen der Atmosphäre, das ist, den Olymp bewohnen; sie sind das nächste Glied in der ausgespannten Kette der Geschöpfe aufwärts, das sich an die Menschheit anschlingt. Sie lebten mit den Menschen vormals in traulicher Einigung und sichtbarer Gemeinschaft, gatteten sich mit den Adamskindern, und ihre Nachkommenschaft hat sich noch bis auf diesen Tag in der Unterwelt erhalten. Der schalkhafte Schwan der die unbesorgte Leda im einsamen Bade berückte, und hinterher den idealischen Donnerer spielte, war nichts anders als ein solcher Genius, welcher seine weibliche Nachkommenschaft mit der Gabe ausgesteuret hat, unter gewissen Umständen und zu gewissen Absichten die Schwanengestalt ihres Ahnherrn nachzuahmen. Aus dem Schoße unsrer mütterlichen Erde quillen in den drei bekannten Weltteilen<sup>7</sup> drei Brunnlein hervor, welche den Luftgeistern dienen sich darinnen abzukühlen, zugleich ist ihnen die Eigenschaft verliehen, den reizenden Bewohnerinnen der obern Regionen die wir unter dem Namen der Feien kennen, und welche die Vorwelt als Göttinnen des Himmels ehrte, ihre jugendliche Gestalt und Schönheit zu erhalten. Eben diese Kraft und Wirkung äußern diese Quellen an allen sterblichen Schönen die ihre Abkunft von einem Genius oder einer Feie herleiten können, wenn sie jährlich einmal zur Zeit der Sonnenwende darinne baden. Weil jedoch diese Brunnlein in fernen Landen anzutreffen sind, und nur dem Zweige der Abkömmlinge aus dem Feienadel, der aus dem Schwanengeschlecht der Mutter Leda sproßt, Schwingen zum Flug verliehen sind, so können sich wenige ihres Erbgutes erfreuen und die mehresten welken nach dem gemeinen Los der Adamstöchter als sterbliche Blumen dahin.

So wunderbar es Euch auch vorkommen mag, edler Ritter, so gewiß ist es, daß die Geschlechtstafel der schönen Zoe bis zu den Eiern der Leda hinaufgehet. Der sicherste Beweis davon ist, daß sie alle Jahr einmal zum Schwane wird, oder, wie sie zu reden pflegt, ihr Schwanenkleid anlegt; denn Ledens Töchter machen nicht wie die übrigen Menschenkinder nackend ihren Eintritt in die Welt, sondern bedecken ihren zarten Leib mit einem luftigen Gewande, aus verdichteten Lichtstrahlen des Äthers gewebt, welches sich nach dem Maße ihres Wachstums ausdehnet, und nicht nur alle Eigenschaften der reinsten Feuerluft besitzt, die irdische Körperschwere zu überwinden und mit leichtem Flug bis an die Wolken zu erheben, sondern auch noch überdies der Besitzerin die Schwanengestalt mitteilt, solange sie damit bekleidet ist. Die jährliche Reise ins Schönheitsbad erfordert eine Zeit von neun Tagen, und wenn diese Wallfahrt nicht verhindert oder unterlassen wird, so gewähret sie der weiblichen Eitelkeit den sonst unerreichbaren Lieblingswunsch des immerwährenden Genusses der Schönheit und Jugend.

Verdreußt es Euch nun nicht den fernen Weg zu ziehen, und Euch an einem dieser wunderbaren Brunnen zu lagern, um der schönen Zoe das Geständnis der Liebe zu tun, das sie auf Naxos schwerlich von Euch anhören würde, so will ich Euch anzeigen wo Ihr dieselben zu suchen habt. Die erste dieser Brunnquellen ist gelegen im Reich Habissinia tief in Afrika, und besteht aus den berühmten Quellen des Nilflusses; die zwote ist ein grundloser Wasserpfuhl am Fuß des Gebürges Ararat in Asia, welcher die Wasserflut des Weinerfinders in sich verschlungen hat; und die dritte quillt in Europa im Reich Germania, da wo die Wurzel der Sudeten gegen Westen ins ebenere Land ausläuft; sie sammlet ihr Gewässer in einen Weiher welcher in einem anmutigen Tale liegt, von des Landes Eingebornen das Schwanenfeld genannt. Diesen Weiher pflegt Zoe am öftersten zu besuchen, denn er ist ihr am nächsten gelegen; es wird Euch auch nicht schwer fallen die magischen Schwäne von den natürlichen durch eine Federkrone auf dem Haupte zu unterscheiden. Wenn Ihr nun auf der Lauer stehet in der frühen Morgenstunde, ehe die Strahlen der aufgehenden Sonne das Wasser berühren, oder des Abends, so sie eben zu Rüste gegangen ist, und ihr erbleichendes Licht den westlichen Himmel noch rötet, so habt wohl acht ob Schwäne ziehen. Wenn Ihr wahrnehmet daß sie sich aufs Wasser oder in den Schilf herablassen, so werdet Ihr bald darauf im Weiher anstatt der Schwäne badende Nymphen erblicken, und Euer Scharfblick wird Euch leicht entdecken ob Eure Geliebte dabei sei, oder ob sie sich nicht in der Gesellschaft ihrer Basen befindet. Ist Euch das Glück günstig sie Euch entgegenzuführen, so zaudert nicht, ihres Schleiers und der Krone die Ihr am Ufer finden werdet Euch zu bemächtigen, dadurch kommt sie in Eure Gewalt und kann ohne dieses Flügelkleid nicht mehr entfliehen. Was Ihr dann ferner zu tun habt wird Euch die Liebe eingeben.<

Freund Theophrast schwieg und ich wunderte mich höchlich über seine Rede, wußte nicht ob ich seinen Worten Glauben geben, oder ihn Lügen strafen sollte, daß er mich durch ein Märchen äffen wollte. Er beteuerte mir aber mit einem hohen Eidschwur und mit einer zuversichtlichen truglosen Miene, die mir glaubwürdiger schien als ein körperlicher Eid, daß sich die Sache in der Tat also verhalte. Nachdem ich eine Zeitlang geschwiegen hatte, sprach ich mit vollem Vertrauen auf seine Worte: »Wohlan Freund, geleitet mich alsbald auf das Schiff, ich will das Abenteuer bestehen, davon Ihr mir saget, will die Welt durchkreuzen wie der ewig laufende Jud, bis ich gelange zu einem der Brunnlein, an welchem ich das Ziel meiner Wünsche zu finden vermeine.« Drauf schiffte ich durch den Hellespont gen Konstantinopel, nahm daselbst ein Pilgerkleid, und zog, in Gesellschaft einiger wallfahrtenden Brüder, die aus dem Heiligen Lande zurückkamen, so schier ich immer konnte den Sudeten zu, in welchen ich lange Zeit herumirrete, bis mir der sehnlich gesuchte Schwanenteich verkundschaftet wurde. In dessen Angesicht erbaute ich unter der heuchlerischen Hülle der Andacht diese Einsiedelei, die bald von frommen Seelen besucht wurde, weil jedermann mich für einen Heiligen

hielt, und himmlischen Trost von mir begehrte, der ich inwendig doch nur fleischliche Gefühle hegte: denn meine Gedanken und Begierden trachteten mit Ungestüm nach dem Anblick der geliebten Schwanengestalt.

Bald nachher als ich mich hier wohnhaft niedergelassen hatte, errichtete ich dort jene Schilfhütte, daraus im verborgenen zu bestimmter Zeit nach den Badegästen zu glosen, und wurde inne, daß mich der Arzt Theophrast nicht mit Lügen berichtet hatte. Um die Zeit der sömmerlichen Sonnenwende, sah ich bald mehr bald weniger Schwäne auf dem Weiher anlangen, die zum Teil ihre natürliche Gestalt behielten, teils wenn sie das Wasser berührten in liebliche Dirnen sich umgestalteten; doch meine Geliebte konnt ich darunter nicht ansichtig werden. Drei Sommer harrete ich vergebens unter ungeduldiger Hoffnung aus, die mich täuschte. Der vierte kam, ich spekulierte fleißig aus meinem Hinterhalt hervor, hörte eines Tages in der Morgendämmerung Fittige über mir rauschen, und erblickte bald darauf badende Nymphen im Weiher, welche mit großer Unbefangenheit im Wasser scherzten, ohne zu wännen, daß sie von den Augen eines Spähers belauscht würden. Indem der Tag begann sah ich mit Entzücken die Gestalt der schönen Zoe mir vorschweben; das Herz schlug laut in meiner Brust, aber der Taumel der Leidenschaft bemächtigte sich meiner ganzen Seele also, daß ich Freund Theophrasts guter Lehren ganz darüber vergaß. Anstatt des Besitzes der reizenden Buhlschaft durch das sichere Unterpfand ihres Flugschleiers mich zu versichern, trieb mich die ungestüme Freude aus der Rohrwarte hervor, ich erhob meine Stimme laut und rief: »Zoe von Naxos, Leben meiner Seele, erkennet den welschen Ritter in mir, weiland Euren getreuen Paladin, an welchen die Liebe Euer Geheimnis verraten, und ihn angetrieben hat Eurer hier zu harren am Schönheitsquell!« Die verschämte Badegesellschaft befiel groß Schrecken bei dieser Überraschung, sie erhoben lautes Geschrei, schöpften mit der hohlen Hand des Wassers aus dem Weiher und gossen mir einen Platzregen entgegen, gleichsam meine verwegenen Augen damit zu blenden. Ich aber befahrte mich eines Ärgern von diesem Benehmen, dachte an Aktäons Schicksal und wich etwas scheu zurück, indes schlüpfen sie in das Schilfrohr und verbargen sich. Kurz drauf sah ich sieben Schwäne auffliegen die sich hoch in die Luft empor schwangen und entschwanden. Nun bedacht ich mein törichtes Beginnen, gebärdete mich als ein Unsinniger, zerriß mein Kleid, raufte mir die Haare aus, zerzauste den Bart und jammerte sehr bis sich mein wütiger Sinn verkühlt hatte und in ermattender Schwermut sich verlor. Ich schlich tiefsinnig zurück nach meiner Klause und nahm den Weg über den Platz wo der Schilfhütte gegenüber die Schwäne sich aufgeschwungen hatten. Da fand ich den Morgentau vom Grase abgestreift und einen Fußtapfen im feuchten Sande, der mir Zoens niedlichen Fuß abzubilden schien, dabei lag ein Päcklein zusammen gewickelt, welches ich behend ergriff. Als ich's voneinander schlug, war's ein weiblicher Handschuh von feiner weißer Seide, der sich an keine andre als an Zoens zarte Hand passen konnte, daraus fiel ein Fingerreif hervor, mit einem hellfunkelndem Rubin geschmückt, der als ein Herz gestaltet war. Von diesem, allem Anschein nach absichtlichen Hinterlaß, machte ich mir die günstigste Erklärung; ich vermutete Zoe habe mit diesem Geschenke sagen wollen, sie hinterlasse mir ihr Herz, sie sei nicht unempfindlich gegen mich, und ob sie gleich itzt Wohlstands halber von ihrer Gesellschaft sich nicht habe trennen dürfen, so werde sie doch baldmöglichst ohne Geleitschaft zum Schwanenteich zurückkehren um meine Wünsche zu erhören.

Mit diesem Gedanken tröstete ich mich, ein, zwei und mehrere Jahre, harrete, ohne daß meine Geduld ermüdete, des so sehnlich gewünschten Schwanenbesuchs; aber sie waren durch meine Unbedachtsamkeit gleichsam vom Weiher weggebannt. In der Folge fanden sich doch einige wieder ein, dadurch lebte meine Hoffnung von neuem auf, ich belauschte sie fleißig und genoß zuweilen des Anblicks himmlischer Gestalten, ohne daß sie auf meine Sinnlichkeit einigen Eindruck machten: denn ich hatte keine Augen als für die reizende Zoe allein, die ich doch nie wieder erblickte. Indessen bewahre

ich den Ring in meinem Schatzkästlein als eine Reliquie, und das Andenken der zarten Buhlschaft in meinem Herzen als ein Heiligtum. An dem Platz wo ich den Fund tat, pflanzte ich einen Rosenstrauch und viel Liebstöckel, auch Mannstreu und Vergißmeinnicht, ringsumher. Unter der täuschenden Hoffnung der Wiederkehr meiner Herzgeliebten, hat die Zeit meinen Rücken gekrümmt und tiefe Furchen über die Stirn gezogen. Gleichwohl vergnügt mich die Ankunft der Schwäne noch immer auf diesem Weiher, indem sie mich des Abenteuers meiner Jugend und an den angenehmsten Traum meines Lebens erinnert. Wenn ich nun am Rande meiner irdischen Wallfahrt einen ernsten Blick auf die Vergangenheit werfe, merk ich zwar mit einem gewissen Mißbehagen, daß ich mein Leben verschleudert habe, wie ein reicher Prasser sein Erbgut, ohne Frucht und Genuß; es ist dahin geschwunden wie ein Traumgesicht in einer langen Winternacht, davon sich die Phantasie nicht loswinden kann, und das beim Erwachen mehr körperliche Ermattung als Erquickung hinterläßt; doch tröst ich mich mit der Erfahrung, daß es das gewöhnliche Los der Sterblichen ist, ihr Leben zu verträumen, einer Phantasie, einer leeren Grille, den besten Teil desselben aufzuopfern und ihre ganze Tätigkeit darauf zu steuern. Alle Schwärmerei und Herzenspoeterei, sie sei aufs Irdische oder Himmlische gestellt, ist eitel Tand und Torheit, und eine fromme Grille ist keinen Deut mehr wert als eine verliebte. Alle in sich gekehrte Menschen, sie seien in Klausen oder Zellen eingesperrt, wenn sie auch für Heilige gelten; oder sie mögen in Wäldern und Feldern herumirren, in den Mond schauen, ausgezupfte Blumen und Grashalmen trübsinnig in einen vorbeirauschenden Fluß werfen, und als Märtyrer einer Leidenschaft unter dem Namen der Dulder und Dulderinnen den Felsen und Wasserbächen oder dem traulichen Monde ihre Elegien vorseufzen, sind unsinnige Träumer. Denn der Kontemplationsgeist, er sei von welcher Art und Natur er wolle, wenn er nicht hinter dem Ackerpfluge herwandelt, oder mit der Hippe und dem Spaten sich vereinbart, ist das elendeste Possenspiel des menschlichen Lebens. Daß ich junge Fruchtbäume geimpft, Traubengeländer angepflanzt und Zuckermelonen gebaut habe, manchen ermatteten Wanderer damit zu erquickern, ist traun ein verdienstlicher Werk gewesen, als alles Fasten und Beten und die Bußübungen die meine Andacht in Ruf brachten; ist auch mehr wert als der Roman meines Lebens. Darum«, fuhr Vater Benno gegen seinen lieben Getreuen den horchsamen Friedbert fort, »darum will ich nicht, daß du als ein rüstiger Jüngling dein Leben in dieser Einöde verträumen sollst. Die kurze Zeit die mir übrig ist, magst du noch bei mir ausharren; aber wenn du mir den letzten Dienst erwiesen und meine Gebeine in das Grab gelegt hast, das ich mir vor langen Jahren aus Gleisneri unter jenem Sandfelsen aushöhlte, sollst du in die Welt zurückkehren und als ein tätiger Mann im Schweiß deines Angesichtes dein Brot gewinnen, für eine liebevolle Gattin und das aufblühende Geschlecht deiner Söhne und Töchter um deinen Tisch her. Der Raub der Sabinerinnen ist ehemals den Römern zu gutem Glück gediehen, willst du, so magst du den Versuch machen, ob dir das Glück wohl will, ein Liebchen aus dem Feiengeschlecht hier an diesem Weiher zu erhaschen, die, wenn sie die Liebe bezähmet, gern bei dir wohnen wird. Wofern aber eine frühere Flamme ihr Herz ergriffen hätte, daß sie dich nicht lieb gewinnen möchte, so laß den Schmetterling davonfliegen, daß dich nicht ein Satansengel in freudenloser Ehe quäle.«

Der Morgen dämmerte bereits am stillen Horizont herauf, da der gesprächsamer Greis seine wunderbare Geschichte mit dieser Nutzenanwendung beschloß und sich auf sein Lager streckte von dürrem Laube zubereitet, der so lang entbehrten Ruhe zu pflegen. Doch in Friedberts Hirn schwammen eine Menge Ideen so bunt und kraus durcheinander, daß ihm kein Schlaf in die Augen kam. Er setzte sich außen vor den Eingang der Einsiedelei, blickte der aufgehenden Sonne entgegen, und sahe jede über seinem Haupte schwirrende Schwalbe für einen Schwan an, auf den er Jagd zu machen entschlossen war. Nach einigen Mondenwechseln schlummerte Vater Benno ins ruhige Grab hinüber und wurde von seinem Pflegling zur Erde bestattet, unter großer Wehklage aller frommen Seelen im Erzgebürge, die den

Verlust ihres himmlischen Anwalds herzlich betrauertem und nach seinem Grabe wallfahrteten, welches dem Erben des Abgeschiedenen guten Erwerb brachte. Die fromme Einfalt der Leidtragenden begehrte aus dem Nachlaß des heiligen Mannes Reliquien, der Erbnehmer unterließ auch nicht gegen klingende Münze sie damit zu versorgen: er zerstückte einen alten Eremitenrock und spendete davon allen die den heiligen Trödelmarkt besuchten kleine Fragmente aus. Wie er sahe daß der Handel gut vonstatten ging, erwachte in ihm der Kaufmannsgeist, er spekulierte noch auf einen andern Artikel der nicht minder ergiebig war, zersplitterte den weißdornen Stab seines Meisters in dünne Späne, die fürs Zahnweh helfen sollten, wenn sie als Zahnstocher gebraucht würden, und weil's ihm nicht an Materialien dazu gebrach, würde er die ganze Christenheit mit wundertätigen Zahnstochern verlegt haben, wenn er Abnehmer gefunden hätte. Mit der Zeit verminderte sich der Zulauf, und die Einsiedlerwohnung wurde nun eine wahre Einsiedelei. Desto besser für den Besitzer derselben, der nun seinen romantischen Ideen ganz ungestört nachhangen konnte. Er sahe mit Vergnügen wie die wachsenden Tage die Nächte zusammendrängten, und die Sonne sich seinem Scheitel nahete. Er ging um die Zeit der Sonnenwende fleißig auf die Teichschau, versteckte sich in der Morgen- und Abendstunde in die lauersame Schilfhütte, und machte am Vorabend St. Albani die so sehnlich gewünschte Entdeckung. Drei Schwäne kamen gezogen von Süden her mit majestätischem Schwunge, umkreiseten dreimal den Weiher hoch in der Luft, gleichsam um zu schauen ob alles sicher sei; sie senkten sich allmählich in den Schilf herab, und bald darauf gingen drei liebliche Dirnen daraus hervor, die sich wie die Huldgöttinnen mit den Armen sanft umschlungen hatten, und die herrlichste Gruppe bildeten, die je einem sterblichen Auge vorgeschwebt hat. Sie scherzten und wogeten sich auf den kristallinen Fluten, koseten miteinander in guter Ruhe und ließen aus ihrem melodischen Munde ein frohes Lied ertönen. Der Laurer stand da in süßes Entzücken verschwebt, ohne Bewegung wie eine Marmorsäule, und es fehlte wenig so hätte er den günstigen Augenblick eine Beute zu erhaschen ungenutzt verloren. Zum Glück ermannete sich noch seine Besinnungskraft und riß ihn gerade zur rechten Zeit aus der zaubervollen Ekstase. Er sputete sich, seinen Standort zu verlassen, schlich sich unbemerkt durch das Gesträuche an den Platz, wo die Schwanengesellschaft ihre ätherische Garderobe am Strande verwahret hatte. Er fand drei jungfräuliche Schleier ins Gras gebreitet, von einem unbekanntem Gewebe, feiner als Spinnwebe und weißer als frischgefallener Schnee. Der obere Zipfel derselben war durch eine kleine goldene Krone gezogen, und oberhalb in Buffen zusammengefaltet, daß sie gleichsam einen Federbusch bildeten. Daneben lagen noch Unterkleider aus stärkerm Stoff, meergrün und leibfarben, dem Anschein nach von persischer Seide. Mit gieriger Hand ergriff der kecke Räuber den ersten besten Schleier, und eilte freudenvoll mit dieser Beute seiner Wohnung zu, voll ungeduldiger Erwartung, was ihm sein Glück für ein Los würde beschert haben.

Sobald er seinen Schatz einer eisernen Truhe anvertrauet hatte, setzte er sich außen vor den Eingang der Felsengrotte auf eine Rasenbank, wie ein römischer Augur den Vogelflug zu beobachten und daraus sein Schicksal sich zu prophezeien. Der Abendstern fing eben an zu funkeln, und gleich nachher erhoben sich zwei Schwäne mit scheuem Flug empor, und eilten davon wie von einem Raubtier aufgescheucht. Da fing's an in seinem Herzen zu arbeiten, die Freude hüpfte in jeder Ader, zuckte und ruckte an jeder Senne. Die Neubegier trieb ihn nach dem Weiher, die Besonnenheit führte ihn in die Grotte zurück. Nach langem Kampfe, behielt die Überlegung, welches bei der Liebe ein seltener Fall ist, endlich die Oberhand. Der schlaue Wicht meinte, es sei ratsam und der Sache förderlich den Schalk zu verbergen, und wenigstens immer klüger, den Heuchler, als den Räuber zu spielen. Er zündete flugs seine Lampe an, deren Schimmer, wie er mit Wahrscheinlichkeit vermutete, den schönen Nachtvogel herbeilocken würde, nahm seinen Rosenkranz zur Hand, setzte sich in die Positur eines Andächtlers und ließ ein

Korn vom Paternoster nach dem andern durch die Finger fallen, dabei horchte er scharf auf, ob sich von außen was regen würde.

Der Fund glückte, er hörte ein leises Geräusch gleich einem schüchternen Fußtritt im Sande, der sich zu verraten scheut. Der schalkhafte Klausner verdoppelte seine scheinbare Andacht, da er bemerkte, daß er beobachtet wurde, endigte doch solche bald her nach, erhob sich von dem Betschemel und blickte seitwärts um. Da stund sie da die schöne Gefangene im reinsten weiblichen Harm, mit dem Ausdruck der höchsten Schmerzensempfindung und sanftverschämter stiller Schöne. Bei diesem Anblick schmolz dem empfindsamen Friedbert das Herz in süßer Zärtlichkeit dahin, wie ein Tropfen Wachs von der Flamme der Kerze. Der Ausdruck ihres Kummers war so unnachahmlich schön, daß ihn keine unsrer romantischen Dulderinnen würde nachzukünsteln wissen. Sie eröffnete ihren holdseligen Mund mit ängstlich bittender Gebärde, der jugendliche Eremit vernahm eine melodische Stimme, die seinem Ohr schmeichelte, ohne ein Wort von ihrer Rede zu verstehen; denn die Sprache der Jungfrau war ihm fremd. Indessen erriet er leicht den Inhalt der Worte, die wahrscheinlich eine ängstliche Bitte um die Zurückgabe des geraubten Schleiers enthielten. Allein der Schalk mißverstand mit Vorbedacht ihre Gebärde und bemühte sich nur ihr begreiflich zu machen, sie hab für ihre Tugend in diesem frommen Zufluchtsorte nichts zu fürchten. Er zeigte ihr in einer abgesonderten Felsenkammer ein reinlich zubereitetes Nachtlager, trug ihr die niedlichsten Früchte und Zuckerwerk auf und tat alles was ihm seine Eremitenpolitik eingab, ihr Vertrauen zu erwerben. Doch die berückte Schöne schien darauf nicht zu achten, sie setzte sich in einen Winkel, überließ sich ganz ihrer tiefen Betrübnis, rang und wand die Lilienhände, weinte und schluchzete ohne Aufhören, welches der fromme Friedbert sich also zu Herzen gehen ließ, daß er sich der Tränen gleichfalls nicht erwehren konnte und in diesem weinerlichen Schauspiel seine Rolle so zu seinem Vorteil spielte, daß die schöne Ausländerin aus dieser gutmütigen Mitempfindung ihrer Leiden einigen Trost empfand, den teilnehmenden Menschenfreund von dem Verdachte des Schleierraubes freisprach und in ihrem Herzen ihn diesfalls um Verzeihung bat. Sie wünschte nur ein Mittel zu erfinden, den frommen Gastfreund der Ursache ihres Kummers zu verständigen, da dieser gar nicht zu erraten schien, was sie eigentlich quäle.

Die erste Nacht verging in der Einsiedlergrotte sehr traurig, aber der Morgenröte ist von jeher die Gabe verliehen gewesen, mit ihrem Rosenfinger die nächtlichen Tränen der Leidenden abzuwischen. Friedbert verrichtete bei Aufgang der Sonne seine gewöhnliche Andacht, welches der schönen Fremden wohlgefiel. Sie ließ sich bereden etwas von dem aufgetragenen Frühstück zu kosten, nachher ging sie hinaus, nochmals am Ufer des Weihers den verlorren Schleier aufzusuchen, denn itzt währte sie, ein mutwilliger Zephyr habe mit dem leichten Gewebe Schäkerei getrieben und es irgend ins Gesträuche verwehet. Der dienstfertige Friedbert begleitete sie und half ihr treulich suchen, ob er wohl wußte daß das vergebne Mühe war. Der mißlungene Versuch trübte zwar wieder die Stirn der zarten Jungfrau, aber in ihren Adern floß leichtes ätherisches Blut, der Gram schlug in ihrem Herzen so wenig tiefe Wurzel, als der Nachtschatten im Flugsande. Sie fand sich nach und nach in ihr Schicksal, ihr trübes Auge heiterte sich auf wie im Abendglanze die Wolken spielen, sie gewöhnte sich an den Gesellschafter ihrer Einsamkeit, und der Blick ihrer Augen ruhte zuweilen mit Wohlbehagen auf seinen blühenden Wangen. Alles das bemerkte der lauersame Klausner mit innigem Vergnügen, beieferte sich nur desto mehr diese günstigen Adspekten zu nutzen und durch tausend kleine Aufmerksamkeiten seinen Vorteil zu befördern. Die Liebe hatte sein Gefühl also verfeinert, und ihm einen Tiefblick in das weibliche Herz verliehen, daß sein schlichter flacher Schwabensinn ganz schien umgeschaffen zu sein. Eben diese erfinderische Liebe gab dem Klausnerpaar eine lakonische doch expressive Sprache ein, daß sie sich so verständlich wie Inkle und Yariko miteinander besprechen konnten.

Friedbert hatte lange den Wunsch gehegt zu erfahren aus welcher Zunge, aus welchem Volk und Geschlecht die schöne Unbekannte abstamme, in welchem Stand sie geboren sei, um zu prüfen ob die Liebe gleich und gleich gepaaret habe. Als ein unwissender Laie wußte er freilich nicht, daß der kleine Mund der lieblichen Dirne griechische Worte rundete, für ihn war jede Mundart außer der schwäbischen so gut als malabarisch. Durch Hülfe des neuerfundenen Sprachidioms wurde er belehrt, daß das Glück eine griechische Schönheit in sein Netz hatte fallen lassen. Zu Friedberts Zeiten erhitzte zwar noch kein griechisch Ideal die Phantasie deutscher Jünglinge, keinem fiel es ein die Reize seiner Buhlschaft ins Griechische zu übersetzen, ihren griechischen Wuchs zu rühmen, das schönste Verhältnis des weiblichen Körpers zwischen acht und neun Kopflängen zu setzen, oder das ein griechisches Profil zu nennen, wo die Nasenwurzel mit der Stirn in gerader Linie fortläuft. Das Auge und nicht der Maßstab, der Gefühlssinn und nicht Schulwitz, waren die einzigen Richter der Schönheit, deren Ausspruch für gültig erkannt wurde, und niemand kümmerte sich darum was Griechen oder Ungriechen davon urteilten. Und so empfand Friedbert auch, daß Kalliste schön sei, eh er erfuhr daß sie von griechischer Abkunft war. Aber hoch horchte er auf, da sie ihm kund tat, sie stamme aus fürstlichem Geblüt und sei des Fürsten Zeno und der schönen Zoe von Naxos jüngste Tochter.

»Sage mir Freund Eremit«, fuhr sie fort, »was hat es mit diesem Weiher für eine Bewandnis, so du darum Wissenschaft hast, und warum mahnte meine Mutter ihre Töchter ab, das mitternächtliche Bad zu besuchen? Hat sie hier irgend ein ähnliches Abenteuer gehabt ihres Schleiers verlustig zu gehen? Sie pflegte uns jährlich nach den Nilquellen zu schicken, ohne uns jemals selbst zu geleiten; denn mein Vater hielt sie aus Eifersucht in strenger Gefangenschaft bis an seinen Tod. Weil sie nun nicht mehr zum Feienbade gelangen konnte, Schönheit und Jugend zu erfrischen, so blüdete sie ab, welkte dahin und alterte. Noch lebt sie in ihrem Wittum verschlossen in trübsinniger Einsamkeit, denn wenn Jugend und Schönheit verrauchen, sind für unser Geschlecht die Freuden des Lebens entflohn. Wir lebten unter mütterlicher Aufsicht, vom Hofe unsers Oheims entfernt, der meinem Vater in der Regierung der Zykladen gefolgt war, und sie pflegte sich nie von uns zu trennen, außer die kurze Zeit wenn wir den Feienbrunnen jährlich besuchten. Meine ältern Schwestern lüstete einsmals, einen Flug gegen Mitternacht zu wagen, Jugend und Leichtsinn machte sie der mütterlichen Vermahnung vergessen, sie glaubten daß schwüle Luft und Sonnenbrand in diesen Gegenden ihnen weniger lästig fallen würde, als in den ägyptischen Sandwüsten. Auf diesem Zuge den wir der Mutter sorgfältig verhehlten, begegnete uns nichts Widriges, darum wiederholten wir die Badereise hierher mehrmals, bis ich Unglückliche das Opfer des Vorwitzes meiner Schwestern worden bin. Ach, wo verbirgt sich der feindliche Zauberer, der den badenden Nymphen auflauret, ihnen aus boshafter Schadenfreude den Schleier zu rauben! Banne mir den Ruchlosen, du Heiliger, daß er aus den Lüften heruntertaumele zu meinen Füßen, wenn er in den obern Regionen hauset, oder aus der Erdenkluft heraufsteige in der schauerlichen Mitternachtstunde, wenn er das Licht scheuet, und mir mein Eigentum und Erbe zurückbringe, welches ihm nichts nutzen noch frommen kann.«

Friedbert freute sich nicht wenig über den Irrtum der reizenden Kalliste, daß sie einem Zauberer den Diebstahl beimaß, und bemühte sich, sie darinne zu erhalten. Er dichtete ein Märchen von einem verwünschten Prinzen, welcher der Sage nach im Schwanenfelde herumtose, und sein boshafte Vergnügen darin finde, die geflügelten Badegäste zuweilen zu äffen. Zugleich gab er ihr zu verstehen, daß ihm die Gabe Geister zu bannen nicht verliehen sei, daß er aber wohl davon gehört hätte, daß eine gewisse Schwanhilde vor langen Jahren hier auch ihren Schleier verloren, dafür aber einen getreuen Liebhaber gefunden, und unter den Fittigen der Liebe die Werkzeuge zum Flug leicht entbehrt hätte, zumal da ihr die Wunderquelle Jugend und Schönheit zu erhalten, so nahe zur Hand gewesen sei. Die



reizende Kalliste fand in dieser Vorstellung viel Beruhigung, nur der Aufenthalt in der Einöde, so viel Annehmlichkeiten die Natur dieser wilden Gegend auch verliehen hatte, schien ihr nicht zu behagen, zum Beweis daß die Empfindsamkeit, die Zwillingsschwester der Liebe, ihr Herz noch nicht befangen hatte: denn ein einsames Tal, eine wüste unbewohnte Insel, ist das eigentliche Elysium empfindsamer Seelen. Der gefällige Klausner vernahm nicht sobald den Wunsch seiner Gastfreundin, so war er bereit die Einsiedelei mit ihr zu verlassen; doch ließ er sich merken, daß ihn für die Aufopferung, in das Geräusch der Welt zurückzukehren, nichts entschädigen könne, als der Genuß der häuslichen Glückseligkeit in den Armen eines tugendsamen Weibes. Dabei blinzten seine Augen sie so freundlich an, daß sie leicht abmerken konnte wohin das gemeinet sei. Sie schlug die ihrigen errötend nieder, und das tat ihm so wohl und befeuerte seine Hoffnung also, daß er von Stund an zusammenpackte, sich wieder als ein Kriegermann herausputzte, und mit seiner schönen Gefährtin den Weg nach seiner Heimat nahm.

Es liegt ein Städtlein in Schwabenland Eglingen auf der Rauhen Alp genannt, ein Erbgut der Herren von Gravenegg, daselbst hauset Friedberts Mutter auf ihrem Wittum, segnete das Andenken ihres verstorbenen Gatten, und fluchte den Meißnern, die ihrer Meinung nach Friedbert ihren lieben Jungen erschlagen hatten. Jedem verstümmelten Lanzknechte, der aus dem Meißner Heereszug zurückkam, und vor ihrer Tür ein Almosen heischte, reichte sie mildiglich einen Buchhorner Heller, und forschte nach Kundschaft von ihrem Sohne, und wenn ihr ein schwatzhafter Invalid von dem wackern Jüngling was vorzufabeln wußte, wie er als ein braver Kämpfe gefochten und als ein Held gefallen sei, wieviel Grüße er noch an seine fromme Mutter bestellt habe, ehe er die Seele auf der Wahlstatt ausgeblutet, zapfte sie dem Lügner einen Schoppen Wein und ließ ihren mütterlichen Augen dabei so ergiebige Tränen entquellen, daß sie das Vortuch ausringen konnte. Unter dieser Wehklage waren vier Sommer verflossen und die rauhe Herbstluft schüttelte bereits das buntfarbige Laub von den Ästen, da geriet das stille sittsame Städtlein plötzlich in frohen Aufruhr; ein reitender Bote verkündete, der tapfere Friedbert sei nicht umgekommen in der Schwabenschlacht, sondern sei aus fremden Landen im Anzuge nach seiner Vaterstadt, gerüstet als ein stattlicher Ritter, der viel Abenteuer im Morgenlande bestanden habe, und eine wunderschöne Braut heimführe, die Tochter des Sultans von Ägypten, mit großer Morgengabe. Der Ruf vergrößert bekanntlich alles; das Wahre an der Sache war, daß Friedbert aus der Erbschaft des Vater Benno und aus seiner Zahnstocherfabrik so viel Reichtum erworben hatte, daß er auf dem Heimzuge nach Schwaben von Ort zu Ort seinen Troß vergrößerte; er kaufte Pferde und Saumrosse mit herrlichen Decken, kleidete sich und die schöne Kalliste prächtig, nahm Dirnen und Diener an, und zog stolz einher, wie ein Abgesandter des Königs von Aragonien.

Da die Eglinger den Zug von der Augspurger Straße sahen dahertraben, lief alles Volk zusammen mit Jauchzen und Frohlocken, und Friedberts Schwestern und Schwäher, auch die löbliche Bürgerschaft, von dem ehrsamem Magistrat angeführt, zogen ihm entgegen mit der Bürgerfahne und ließen beim Einzug ihres heimkehrenden Mitbürgers vom Turm trommeten und lieblich schalmeien, als sei er von den Toten wieder aufgelebt. Die tränenreiche Mutter umarmte ihren Sohn mit froher Wehmut, richtete ein groß Mahl aus an ihre Freundschaft und Gevatterleute und teilte ihren ganzen Hellervorrat unter die Armen. Sie konnte sich nicht satt sehen an der schönen Gestalt ihrer zukünftigen Schnur und betäubte sie mit Liebkosungen und wohlmeinender Geschwätzigkeit. Die schöne Griechin wurde bald das Gespräch der Stadt und der umliegenden Gegend. Viel Ritter und Edle, auch andre Mädchenspäher drängten sich herzu, nannten den glücklichen Friedbert Bruder und Vetter, machten mit ihm Kameradschaft und schwuren ihm ewige Freundschaft; er aber hatte eine eifersüchtige Ader vor der Stirn, die ihm leicht Schwindel und Hauptweh er regte, verbarg die schöne Kalliste vor den Augen aller

Welt und bestellte die wachsame Mutter zur Ehrenhüterin über sie, wenn er gen Hof ritt dem von Gravenegg aufzuwarten, dessen Dienstmann er war. Er förderte dabei seine Liebesangelegenheit auf alle Weise, und die schöne Griechin, die kein Mittel sahe in ihr Vaterland zurückzukehren und an dem blühenden Mann Gefallen trug, der als ein stattlicher Junker jetzt eine ganz andere Figur machte als vorher in dem aschfarbenen Eremitenrock, setzte sich über den Unterschied des Standes hinweg und willigte ein sich mit ihm zu vermählen. Er beschenkte sie mit einem köstlichen Brautgewande, der Tag zur Hochzeitfeier wurde angesetzt, das gemästete Kalb und die Kapaunen geschlachtet und die Hochzeitkuchen eingemengt.

Tages vorher ritt der Bräutigam nach Landes-Sitte umher die Hochzeitgäste einzuladen, in seiner Abwesenheit beschäftigte sich die schöne Kalliste ihren Brautputz zu ordnen, die weibliche Eitelkeit reizte sie das neue Kleid anzuproben um zu versuchen, ob es gut an ihrem schlanken Leib anpasse. Die dem schönen Geschlecht gewöhnliche Tadelsucht, das Vollkommenste selbst zu meistern und einen Mangel daran zu entdecken, ließ ihr bald etwas Mißständiges bemerken, das einer Abänderung zu bedürfen schien, worüber sie das schwiegermütterliche Gutachten einzuholen nötig fand. Die redselige Frau erschien und der Anblick der geputzten Dame brachte ihre Zunge alsbald in Bewegung. Sie ergoß einen Strom von Lobsprüchen über die Wohlgestalt der lieblichen Schnur, und konnte nicht aufhören den Geschmack ihres Sohnes in der Wahl und die Kunst des Schneiders in dem Zuschnitt des Kleides zu bewundern. Sobald sie aber vernahm, daß das Fräulein in Ansehung des letztern Punktes mit ihr nicht gleicher Meinung sei, änderte sie die Sprache um ihre wenige Kenntniss von den Feinheiten der Mode nicht zu verraten, und der Schneider kam dabei sehr ins Gedränge. Hauptsächlich betraf die Kritik des Fräuleins die ungeschickte Form des Brautschleiers, welchen sie mit einem Augspurger Regentuch verglich. »Ach«, erseufzete sie, »daß doch der griechische Schleier, in eine goldne Krone geschlungen, meinen hochzeitlichen Putz verschönerte, der wie ein lichtiges Schneegewölke in den Lüften schwamm und mit dem der Zephyr scherzte, so würden die Dirnen der Stadt mich beneiden und Friedberts Geliebte würde für die schönste der Bräute gepriesen werden! Ach sie ist dahin die Zierde des griechischen Mädchens, die ihm Zauberreize lieh, welche die Augen des Jünglings entzückten!« Eine wehmütige Zähre träufelte dabei von ihren rosenfarbenen Wangen auf den schwanenweißen Busen, welche die gute Mutter ganz weichmütig machte und ihr das Herz sehr einengte, besonders weil sie dafür hielt, das Weinen einer Braut sei von so schlimmer Vorbedeutung als wenn ein Kind im Mutterleibe weine. Diese Kümmernis preßte das Geheimnis heraus, das ihr schon lange zwischen den Lippen schwebte, der offenherzige Friedbert hatte den Schwabenstreich begangen, der geschwätzigen Matrone den Raub des Schleiers zu offenbaren, ohne ihr doch die Eigenschaften desselben zu entdecken; nur um ihn recht sicher zu verwahren, gab er ihn der Mutter als ein Liebespfand aufzuheben, und hatte ihr Stillschweigen geboten. Die Matrone freute sich, eine so gute Gelegenheit gefunden zu haben, die Heimlichkeit, die ihr lange wie ein Stein auf dem Herzen gelegen hatte, abzuwälzen. »Weinet nicht zartes Fräulein«, sagte sie, »daß sich Eure sonnenhellen Äuglein nicht trüben und die hochzeitliche Freude in Tränen zerrinne, kümmert Euch auch nicht um den Schleier, er ist wohl aufgehoben und unter meiner Hand. Dieweil Ihr so groß Verlangen traget ihn anzulegen, will ich, so Ihr mir gelobet gegen Euren Sponsen reinen Mund zu halten und mich nicht zu verraten, aus meiner Flachskammer ihn herabholen, mich lüftet selbst zu sehen ob er sich zu Eurem Brautputze paßt und Euch wohl anstehe.« Kalliste stund wie eine Bildsäule da, das Blut erstarrte in ihren Adern vor Verwunderung; Freude über die gemachte Entdeckung und Verdruß über den heuchlerischen Friedbert setzten sie einige Augenblicke in ein untätiges Staunen. Doch da sie den Pantoffelgang der Matrone hörte, nahm sie alle Besinnung zusammen, empfing den Schleier aus ihrer Hand mit Freuden, wirbelte ein Fenster auf, und indem sie die goldne Krone auf dem Haupte befestigte, und das ätherische Gewand ihr über die

Schultern herabrollte, ward sie zum Schwan, welcher die Flügel ausbreitete und husch zum Fenster hinausflog.

Jetzt kam das Staunen an die Alte bei dieser wunderbaren Metamorphose. Sie schlug ein großes Kreuz vor sich, tat einen lauten Schrei und empfahl sich in den Schutz der Heiligen Jungfrau; denn weil sie von der intellektuellen Welt die rohen Begriffe ihres Zeitalters hegte, meinte sie die schöne Kalliste sei nichts anders als ein Gespenst oder eine Teufelslarve gewesen, und der traute Friedbert verwandelte sich mit einemmal in ihren Augen in einen schändlichen Unhold und Teufelsbanner, worüber sie sich höchlich betrübte und wünschte daß er lieber als ein guter Christ von den Meißnern erschlagen wär, als daß er sich in solche satanische Netze hätte verwickeln lassen. Friedbert ahndete nichts von der für ihn so traurigen Katastrophe, die sich in seiner Abwesenheit daheim begeben hatte, und kam gegen Abend fröhlich und wohlgemut angeritten, eilte mit klingenden Sporen die Stiege hinauf ins Brautgemach, sein Liebchen zu umfassen. Aber da er die Tür auftät, flog ihm ein mütterlicher Bannstrahl entgegen, die Matrone zog das Wehr ihrer Beredsamkeit auf, und es wirbelte und rauschte ein Rheinfall von Vorwürfen und Verwünschungen auf ihn herab. Er merkte dadurch mit großer Bestürzung ab was vorgefallen war, gebärdete seiner als ein wütiger Mensch, würde an der Mutter und an sich in der ersten Wut einen Mord begangen haben, wenn jene nicht mit lauttönender Stimme Sturm geläutet und das ganze Haus zusammen berufen hätte, daß die erschrockenen Diener den rasenden Roland noch zu rechter Zeit entwaffneten.

Nachdem auf beiden Seiten der erste Ungestüm sich abgetobet hatte, kam es zu vernünftigeren Erklärungen. Friedbert war bemüht sich von dem Verdacht bestmöglichst zu reinigen, daß er ein Geisterbeschwörer sei und mit Zauberei umginge, oder daß er eine Biondetta<sup>8</sup> in die Familie hätte verpflanzen und seine rechtgläubige Mutter zur Schwiegerin einer satanischen Larve habe machen wollen. Er offenbarte den ganzen Verlauf seiner Abenteuer mit der schönen Kalliste und die Beschaffenheit ihres Flugkleides; doch gegen ein Vorurteil das einmal in eine Weiberseele eingerostet ist, arbeitet die Belehrung umsonst, die Matrone glaubte davon was sie wollte, und Friedbert hatte es nur dem mütterlichen Instinkt zu verdanken, daß sie ihm nicht den Prozeß machen ließ. Indessen gab diese sonderbare Geschichte zu mancherlei Mutmaßungen Anlaß, es fehlte dem verdächtigen Friedbert nur ein schwarzer Hund, um nicht wie D. Faust oder Cornelius Agrippa in den Ruf eines großen Zauberers zu kommen.

Der Bräutigam ohne Braut befand sich in einer unglücklichen Verfassung, sein Gemüt wurde von banger Verzweiflung zerrissen über den Verlust der schönen Kalliste, sein Schicksal hing lange zwischen Tod und Leben, die Wahl des einen wie des andern kostete ihm Überwindung. Es gibt schwerlich einen peinigernden Zustand als am Eingange des Hafens Schiffbruch zu leiden, wenn man die Reise um die Welt glücklich vollendet zu haben glaubt, und am Tage vor der Hochzeit eine geliebte Braut zu verlieren ist ganz das nämliche. Ist sie eine Beute des Todes worden, hat sie ein Räuber entführt, oder ein hartherziger Vater in ein Kloster gesperrt, so gibt es für den Liebhaber einen Weg ihr ins Grab zu folgen, dem Räuber nachzueilen und ihm die Beute abzujagen, oder durch die verschlossenen Klosterpforten zu dringen: aber wenn sie aus dem Fenster davonfliegt, wer kann ihr da naheilen außer die Pariser Luftschwimmer? Doch die edle Kunst den Sterblichen Gang und Bahn durch die ätherischen Gefilde zu eröffnen, kam dem armen Friedbert nicht zustatten, sondern war einem spätern und glücklicheren Zeitalter vorbehalten. Die kurzsichtigen oder neidischen Vielwiser der englischen Sozietät mögen so schief und verächtlich von dem aerostatischen Wunderkinde ihrer Nachbarn urteilen als sie wollen, so liegt doch klar am Tage, daß eine luftige Marechaussee, die Pech und Schwefel herabregnen

ließ, dem leidigen Schleichhandel an den britischen Küsten ungleich zuverlässiger Einhalt tun würde als die schwerfälligen Küstenbewahrer und alle papiernen Beschlüsse des zänkischen Unterhauses.

Friedbert hatte keinen andern Weg seiner davon geflogenen Braut wieder auf die Spur zu kommen als den die Frösche auch nehmen würden, wenn sie auf Reisen gingen, nämlich zu hüpfen und zu schwimmen, je nachdem es die Gelegenheit erfordert, bis sie an Ort und Stelle sind. Die ungeduldige Sehnsucht nach seiner Geliebten dehnte den Abstand von Schwabenland bis in die Zykladen seiner Vorstellung nach weiter, als wenn die Reise in den Mond hätte gehen sollen. »Ach«, rief er voll Verzweiflung aus, »wie kann die träge Erdschnecke dem leicht beflügelten Schmetterlinge folgen, wenn er unstedet und flüchtig von einer Blume zur andern flattert und an keiner Stätte verweilet! Wer bürget mir dafür, daß Kalliste nach Naxos zurückgekehret ist? Wird nicht die Scham, in ihrem Vaterlande für eine Irrläuferin ausgeschrien zu werden, sie bewogen haben, einen andern Zufluchtsort zu wählen? Und wenn sie nun auch in Naxos wär, was könnte mir das frommen? Wie dürft ich Spießbürger meine Augen aufheben gegen eine Fürstentochter des Landes?« Mit diesen Gedanken quälte sich der Mutlose viel Tage lang, welchen Kummer er sich gleichwohl hätte ersparen können, wenn er die Stärke seiner Leidenschaft geprüft und gewußt hätte, daß der Enthusiasmus oft Wunder tut. Plötzlich wirkte der Instinkt was die kaltblütige Überlegung zu keinem Entschluß hatte reifen lassen: er sattelte seinen Rappen, nachdem er sein Gut und Erbe in Taschenformat bequem hatte, ritt zur Hintertür hinaus, damit er das geschwätzig mütterliche Valet vermeiden möchte, und trabte rasch über die vaterländische Grenze, als wenn er die Reise in den Zykladen in einem Futter hätte machen wollen. Glücklicherweise erinnerte er sich des Weges den Vater Benno dahin genommen hatte, und gelangte über Venedig ebenso wie dieser nach mancher überwundener Schwierigkeit auf seiner Meeresfahrt, nur ohne Schiffbruch, flink und frisch in Naxos an.

Mit Freuden hüpfte er ans Land, betrat mit geheimen Wonnegefühl die mütterliche Erde seiner Geliebten, welche er im Schoß ihres Vaterlandes wiederzufinden verhoffte, und sputete sich von der schönen Kalliste Kundschaft einzuziehen; aber niemand wußte ihm zu sagen, wo das Fräulein hingeschwunden sei. Man trug sich mit allerlei Gerüchten und munkelte dies und das, wie es zu geschehen pflegt, wenn ein artiges Mädchen aus dem Zirkel ihrer Bekanntschaft verschwindet, und dies Geflüster urteilt selten zum Vorteil der Abwesenden. Zwar gibt es eine Schanze dahinter man sich gegen die Wurfpeile des lästerzüngigen Gerüchtes zu bergen pflegt, das ist der goldne Spruch: Sie reden was sie wollen, mögen sie doch reden, was kümmert's mich? Aber damit mag sich zur Notwehr schützen wer will und kann, nur kein Mädchen darf das nicht, wenn sie auf ihren Ruf noch einigen Wert setzt. Friedbert grämte sich über die Maßen, daß ihn seine Geliebte so plantiert hatte und war unschlüssig, ob er in seine Einsiedelei zurückkehren, oder eine Wegelagerung an den Nilquellen versuchen sollte. Indem er diesfalls mit sich zu Rate ging, langte Fürst Isidor von Paros, ein Lehnsträger des Despoten der Zykladen in Naxos an, um sich mit Fräulein Irene, einer Schwester der schönen Kalliste, zu vermählen. Es wurden Vorbereitungen zu einem prächtigen Beilager gemacht, und die Feierlichkeit sollte mit einem großen Turnier beschlossen werden. Dem schwäbischen Helden wandelte bei dieser Zeitung sein alter Kriegsmut wieder an, und weil ihn Mißmut und Langeweile quälte, wünschte er Zerstreung, und glaubte, daß er diese bei dem ausgeschriebenen Kampffrennen finden würde, zumal fremde Ritter durch Herolde auf dem Markte der Stadt und auf allen Kreuzstraßen dazu eingeladen wurden. In seinem Vaterlande wär er zwar nicht turnierfähig gewesen, und hätte ihm da leicht begegnen können, mit Spott und Hohn auf die Schranken gesetzt zu werden; in der Ferne aber hielt es eben nicht schwer, unter der Gewährschaft eines vollen Beutels, die konventionellen Prärogative welche der Geburt ankleben, sich zuzueignen. Friedbert spielte in Naxos den Ritter wenigstens mit eben der Würde und dem Anstand, als

der deutsche Schneider den Baron zuweilen in Paris, oder der entlaufene Kammerdiener den Marquis an den deutschen Höfen. Er legte sich eine blanke Rüstung zu, kaufte um hohen Preis ein ritterliches Pferd das seiner Schulen kundig war, und am Tage der zum Rennen bestimmt war, wurde er ohne Anstand in die Schranken eingelassen. Seine Imagination spielte ihm zwar den unerwarteten Streich, die zirkelrunde Stechbahn, in welche die Ritter eingeschlossen wurden, nebst der amphitheatralischen Erhöhung ringsumher mit unzähligen Zuschauern angefüllt, der schauerlichen Backofengestalt wieder zu verähnlichen: doch zuweilen dient die Feigherzigkeit der Bravour zum Sporn in der Gefahr. Der selbstkreierte Ritter brach seine Lanze mit Ehren, hielt sich fest im Sattel und verdiente sich einen Ritterdank, den er aus der Hand der Neuvermählten empfing.

Bei dieser Gelegenheit gelangte er auch zum Handkuß bei der schönen Zoe, welcher die gewöhnliche Hofetikette noch immer den Besitz der Titularschönheit gelassen hatte, wie ein Exminister die Titularexzellenz behält; obgleich der Zahn der Zeit der guten Dame alle Reize abgenagt hatte, daß sie für einen malenden Apell nun nichts mehr war, als Modell zu einem schönen alten Kopfe. Er meldete sich bei ihr unter dem Namen eines welschen Ritters an, es sei nun, daß Zoe für diese Qualität noch eine gewisse Vorliebe hegte, oder daß sie den Ring wahrnahm, der ehemals ihr Eigentum gewesen war, und der jetzt mit dem Herzrubin an des Fremdlings Hand funkelte; gnug er genoß der freundlichsten Aufnahme von ihr und sie schien ein sonderbares Wohlgefallen an ihm zu finden. Nachdem das hochzeitliche Geräusch vorüber war, die Fürstin das Hoflager wieder verlassen, und in den stillen Aufenthalt ihres Palastes sich zurückgezogen hatte, erhielt Friedbert den Zutritt in dieses klösterliche Heiligtum, welches nur wenig Vertrauten offen stund, und Zoe schenkte ihm eine mütterliche Zuneigung. Bei einem Spaziergange in dem schattenreichen Hain des Parkes, drehete sie sich mit ihm abseits und sprach: »Hab eine Bitte an Euch, lieber Fremdling! die Ihr mir nicht versagen dürft. Sagt an, wie seid Ihr zum Besitz des Ringes gelanget, am Goldfinger Eurer rechten Hand? Dieser Ring war ehemals mein Eigentum und ich bin seiner verlustig gegangen, weiß nicht wie oder wann, darum treibt mich die Neugier zu erfahren, wie er Euch zu handen kommen ist?« »Edle Frau«, antwortete der Schalk, »den Ring hab ich auf ehrliche Weise in einem Speerrennen erworben, von einem mannlichen Ritter in meinem Vaterlande, welchem ich obgesiegt habe und der sein Leben damit lösen mußte. Wie der aber dazu gelangt sei, ob ihm der Fingerreif als eine Kriegsbeute anheimgefallen, oder ob er ihn von einem Juden erhandelt, als einen Ritterdank sich erworben, oder durch Erbgangsrecht an sich gebracht hat, vermag ich nicht Euch zu berichten.« »Was würdet Ihr tun«, fuhr Zoe fort, »wenn ich mein Eigentum von Euch zurückforderte? Dem ehrenfesten Ritterstande kommt es zu, eine ziemliche Bitte den Damen nicht abzuschlagen. Doch begehrt ich Euer durch Waffenrecht erworbenes Gut nicht zur Gabe noch Geschenk, ich will Euch dafür lohnen nach dem Werte wie Ihr das Kleinod schätzt, und Eurer Wohltat nie vergessen.«

Friedbert war über dieses Ansinnen gar nicht verlegen und freute sich vielmehr, daß ihm sein Anschlag so wohl gelungen war. »Eure Wünsche, tugendsame Fürstin!« sprach er, »sind mir ein unverbrüchliches Gesetz, sofern es von mir abhängt sie Euch zu gewähren. Gut und Blut sei Euch verpfändet bei ritterlichen Ehren, fordert es von mir, nur verlangt nicht, Eid und Gewissen zu verletzen. Dieweil mir das Kleinod durch einen schweren Kampf zuteil ward, tat ich einen teuren Eid bei Seel und Seligkeit, daß der Ring bei meinem Leben nicht anders von meiner Hand kommen sollte, als bis ich vor dem Altar Herz und Hand meiner Gemahlschaft damit zu ehelicher Treue verpfänden würde. Nun kann ich dieses Eides nicht anders quitt werden, als wenn ihm Gnüge geschiehet; so Ihr aber gesonnen seid mir darin förderlich zu sein, hab ich nichts dagegen, daß Ihr der Braut den Ring abdinget, und aus ihrer Hand Euer vormaliges Eigentum wieder zurückempfahet.« »Wohl gesprochen!« versetzte Zoe, »wählet

aus meinem Hofgesinde eine Jungfrau die Euren Augen gefällt, sie soll mit einer reichen Morgengabe von mir ausgesteuert werden, doch mit dem Beding, daß sie das Kleinod misse, und alsbald wie sie es aus Eurer Hand empfängt in die meinige zurückgebe; Euch aber will ich auch zu hohen Ehren bringen.«

Diese geheimen Traktaten waren nicht sobald geschlossen, so verwandelte sich der klösterliche Palast der Fürstin in einen Harem, alle Schönheiten des Landes berief sie zu sich und nahm sie in ihr Gefolge auf, gab ihnen schöne Kleider und prächtiges Geschmeide, ihre natürlichen Reize durch den unnatürlichen Flitterputz der Modekrämerinnen noch mehr zu erheben. Denn sie wählte ebenso irrig als unsre weibliche Zeitgenossen, der vergoldete Rahmen verkaufe eigentlich das Gemälde und nicht die Zeichnung, obgleich die tägliche Erfahrung lehret, daß ein Galakleid die Liebe so wenig befeuert als der brokadne Rock unsrer lieben Frau zu Loretto die Andacht. Ein prachtloses sittsames Negligé ist die eigentliche Uniform der Liebe, welches mehr Eroberungen macht als ein Brustharnisch von Juwelen und eine Sturmhaube von Spitzen und Blondes, mit den triumphierenden Schwungfedern, welche des Siegs verfehlen.

Friedbert schwamm in einem Strome von Vergnügen, ohne sich gleichwohl von dem Freudenwirbel fortreißen zu lassen. Mitten in dem Geräusch des wieder auflebenden Hofes, bei Gesang und Saitenspiel und fröhlichen Tänzen, zog sich gleichwohl das Fältlein des Trübsinns um seine Stirn. Für ihn schmückten sich die schönsten griechischen Mädchen, sein Herz gleich armierten Magneten desto kräftiger an sich zu ziehen, doch er blieb kalt und unempfindsam. Diese Gleichmütigkeit bei einem jungen blühenden Manne war der Fürstin unerklärbar. Was die Liebesschule anbetraf, so hatte sie selbst jederzeit der Lehre ihres Landsmannes des weisen Plato gefolgt, ob aus Neigung, oder weil die Wachsamkeit des eifersüchtigen Ehedespoten ihrer Leidenschaft keinen freieren Gang erlaubte, das ist schwer zu entscheiden; dem vollblütigen Ritter, aber meinte sie, dürfte das System des sinnlichen Epikur wohl besser behagen, darum hatte sie alles darauf angelegt, sein Herz durch Sinnlichkeit zu bestriicken. Allein sie fand, daß sie sich in ihrer Meinung geirret hatte: weder epikurische Sinnlichkeit, noch die feinern geistigen Empfindungen der platonischen Liebe, schienen seine Sache zu sein, sondern vielmehr ein strenger Stoizismus, der sie in Verwunderung setzte, und ihr zu dem Besitz des Ringes eben keine große Hoffnung machte.

In dieser Untätigkeit waren bereits einige Monate verflossen, daher fand die ungedultige Dame nötig, mit ihrem Ritter, wie sie ihn zu nennen pflegte, über die Angelegenheiten seines Herzens Rücksprache zu halten. Am Tage wo die Wiederkehr des Lenzes gefeiert wurde, und alle ihre Jungfrauen mit frischen Blumenkränzen geschmückt, einen fröhlichen Reihentanz begannen, fand sie ihn einsam und unteilnehmend in einer Laube, wo er sich mit dem auf mißliche Liebe deutenden Zeitvertreib beschäftigte, Frühlingsblumen, die eben hervorgesproßt waren, zu entblättern und zu zerstören. »Unempfindsamer Ritter«, sprach sie, »hat die blühende Natur für Euch so wenig Reize, daß Ihr die ersten Geschenke derselben fühllos zernichtet und Florens Fest entweiht? Ist Euer Herz alles sanften, alles liebevollen Gefühls so unfähig, daß weder die Blumen meines Gartens noch das aufblühende Geschlecht der Dirnen meines Hofes auf Euch einen zärtlichen Eindruck machen? Was weilet Ihr hier in dieser einsamen Laube, da Euch die Freude aus jenem Tanzsaal und die Liebe aus jeder Halle, aus jedem Busch und den geselligen Grotten dieses Gartens winkt? Deutet Euer Trübsinn aber auf zärtliches Gefühl, so offenbaret mir diesen geheimen Kummer, daß ich sehe, ob es in meiner Macht stehet Euer Herz zufrieden zu stellen.« »Euer Scharfsinn, weise Zoe«, gegenredete Friedbert, »blickt in die Verborgenenheiten meiner Seele, Ihr urtheilet ganz recht, daß ein verborgen Feuer in meinem Busen glimmt, von dem ich nicht weiß, ob ich es mit dem Hoffnungsöl unterhalten soll, oder ob es das Mark

aus meinem Gebein verzehren wird. Für alle Nymphen, die Florens Fest dort in fröhlichen Reihentänzen feiern, ist mein Herz kalt und erstorben. Das himmlische Mädchen, das mich entzückt und dem ich mein Herz gelobt habe, schwebt nicht in jenem Kreise froher Tänzerinnen, dennoch hab ich es in Eurem Palaste gefunden, ach, vielleicht nur als eine Schöpfung der glühenden Phantasie des Künstlers! Wiewohl es mir unglaublich ist, daß der Maler ein solches Kunstwerk zuwege richten können, wenn ihm nicht die Meisterhand der Natur die Züge des herrlichen Konterfeis vorgezeichnet hätte.«

Die Fürstin war ungedultig, zu vernehmen, welches Gemälde auf den jungen Rittersmann einen so sonderbaren Eindruck gemacht habe. »Folget mir flugs dahin«, sprach sie, »daß ich urteile, ob der betrüglige Amor mutwilligen Spott mit Eurem Herzen treibe, und eine Wolke statt der Göttin Euch zu umarmen gegeben habe, denn seine Schalkheit geht über alles; oder ob er wider Gewohnheit ehrlich mit Euch zu Werke gegangen, und wahrhaften Liebesgewinn Euch unbetrüglich zgedacht hat.« Zoe besaß eine auserlesene Sammlung von Gemälden, teils Kunstwerke guter Meister, teils Familienstücke. Unter jenen befanden sich Abbildungen der berühmtesten Schönheiten griechischer Abkunft aus ältern und neuern Zeiten, unter diesen war ihre eigne Gestalt verschiedenemal abkonterfeiet mit all den jugendlichen Reizen, die sie ehemals besaß, da sie noch ins Feienbad wallfahrtete. Eine Anwandlung von Eitelkeit, die ihrem Geschlechte zuweilen auch jenseit dem großen Stufenjahre anhangen soll, noch in den Ruinen das Andenken des vormaligen Glanzes zu erneuern, brachte sie auf die Gedanken, daß vielleicht ihr eignes Porträt Friedberts Phantasie bezaubert haben könnte, und sie konnte sich nicht verwehren ein geheimes Vergnügen zu empfinden, wenn sie ihm sagen würde: »Freund das Original zu dem Gemälde bin ich selbst«, und die Vorstellung seiner Bestürzung, wenn der mächtige Zauber auf solche Art gelöset würde, machte ihr im voraus vielen Spaß. Der Ritter Schlaukopf war indessen seiner Sache viel zu gewiß und fürchtete gar nicht, wie er vorgab, eine Malerillusion; er wußte wohl daß das Urbild schöner in der Natur vorhanden war als der Pinsel es nachgeahmt hatte, nur war ihm unbekannt, wo es jetzt anzutreffen sei, und wie er wieder zu dessen Besitz gelangen möchte.

Beim Eintritt in die Galerie flog er mit glühendem Ungestüm zu dem geliebten Konterfei, und sprach in der Stellung eines Anbetenden: »Sehet hier die Göttin meiner Liebe, wo find ich sie? Auf Euren Lippen, weise Fürstin! schwebt mir Tod und Leben. – Entscheidet! Täuscht mich trüglige Minne, so laßt mich zu Euren Füßen sterben; rechtfertigen aber meine Ahnungen die Wahl meines Herzens, so offenbaret mir, welches Volk oder Land dieses Kleinod aufbewahret, daß ich ausziehe die Dame aufzusuchen und durch ritterliche Taten ihre Gunst zu erringen.«

Die ehrsame Fürstin befand sich bei dieser Entdeckung in keiner geringen Verlegenheit, da sie derselben nicht vermutend gewesen war; eine ernsthafte Miene überschattete ihr Angesicht, dessen noch immer schön proportioniertes Oval eine jovialische Idee vorher gerundet hatte, nun aber verlängte sich die Linie von der Stirn zum Kinn um einen guten Zoll. »Unbedachtsamer«, sprach sie: »wie könnt Ihr Euer Herz einer Dame geloben, von der Ihr nicht wißt, ob sie jemals gelebt hat, ob sie Eure Zeitgenossin ist, und ob sie Liebe mit Liebe erwidern kann. Eure Ahnung hat Euch zwar nicht ganz irregeführt, dies feine Lärchen ist weder Fiktion noch Monument einer Schönheit aus vorigen Zeiten, es gehört einem jungen Fräulein zu; sie heißt Kalliste. – Ach einst war sie meine Lieblingstochter! Jetzt ist sie eine Unglückliche, die verdient bemitleidet zu werden. Sie kann Euch nie zuteil werden; in ihrem Busen lodert eine unauslöschliche Flamme gegen einen Verworfenen, den zwar ein Raum von vielen hundert Meilen von ihr trennt; denn sie hat den Mut gehabt, seinen trüglischen Fallstricken zu entfliehen; aber nichtsdestoweniger liebt sie ihn und beweinet ihren Unstern in der Einsamkeit eines Klosters, unfähig

der Empfänglichkeit einer andern Liebe.« Friedbert stellte sich über dieses Fragment aus Zoens Familiengeschichte sehr bestürzt, freute sich aber heimlich in der Seele, daß er den Aufenthalt seiner Geliebten ausgekundschaftet hatte, und noch mehr darüber, daß er aus dem mütterlichen Munde ein so unverdächtiges Zeugnis von der Liebe der Prinzessin zu seiner Wenigkeit empfing. Er unterließ nicht die offenherzige Dame über die sonderbare Intrike ihrer Lieblingstochter auszuforschen, und sie befriedigte seine scheinbare Neugier mit einer parabolischen Geschichte, aus welcher den wahren Sinn herauszuklauben ihm eben nicht viel Mühe machte.

»Kalliste«, sprach sie, »lustwandelte eines Abends am Gestade des Meeres in Gesellschaft ihrer Schwestern, welche der Vorwitz trieb, außerhalb der sichern Ringmauern der mütterlichen Wohnung eine ihnen unbekante Gegend zu besuchen. Hinter einem Hügel des krummen Ufers lag ein Raubschiff vor Anker. Die unbesorgten Mädchen ahndeten keine Gefahr, da sprang ein Räuber aus dem Busch hervor, ereilte die Zagende, trug sie auf seinen Armen ins Schiff, indem ihre leichtfüßigen Schwestern entflohen und führte sie in seine Heimat. Er warb durch tausend Liebkosungen um ihre Gunst, dadurch gelang es ihm, sich in ihr Herz zu stehlen, sie vergaß der Würde ihrer Geburt, und war im Begriff das unauflöslche Bündnis mit dem Arglistigen einzugehen. Da wehete ein günstiger Wind ein Schiffelein an den Strand, sie dachte an ihr Vaterland und an die mütterlichen Tränen die um sie flossen, gab der Stimme der Vernunft Gehör, und nutzte die Gelegenheit ihrer Gefangenschaft zu entrinnen. Aber die unwiderstehliche Leidenschaft, die sich bereits ihres Herzens bemeistert hatte, folgte ihr über Land und Meer, hat tiefen Schmerz in ihre Brust gegraben und alle jugendliche Freude daraus verbannt. Bald wird das Flämmlein ihrer schmach tenden Augen verlischen und die bange Schwermut sie mit dem Grabe gatten, das sie zur Brautkammer sich erkieset hat.« »Nun«, sprach Friedbert, »so soll ihr Grab auch das meinige sein, mein Leben stehet in meiner Hand! Wer mag mir wehren mit der schönen Kalliste zu sterben? Ich bitte Euch nur um die einzige Gunst, zu verschaffen, daß mein Leichnam neben sie begraben werde, damit mein Schatten ihres Grabes hüte. Doch laßt mir vorher den Trost ihr das Geständnis getan zu haben, daß sie die Dame meines Herzens sei, und ihr den Ring zum Unterpand meiner Treue zu überliefern, damit ich meiner Gelübde quitt sei, dann möget Ihr ihn als ein Erbteil dahinnehmen.«

Mutter Zoe wurde durch diese herzbrechende Liebeserklärung des jungen Ritters also gerührt, daß sie sich der Tränen nicht enthalten konnte, zugleich setzte sie einen solchen Lieblingwert auf den Ring, daß sie dem Ritter diese Bitte nicht versagen mochte, nur fürchtete sie, das Fräulein werde bei der dermaligen Stimmung ihres Herzens eben nicht bei Laune sein, ein so verfängliches Geschenk anzunehmen, er wußte sie aber zu belehren, daß eine so rittermäßige Galanterie den strengsten Begriffen der Damen von der Unverletzbarkeit ihrer sonstigen Verbindungen nicht widerspräche. Sie willigte also in sein Begehren ein, und gab ihm einen schriftlichen Befehl an den Archimandriten des Klosters mit, Vorzeigern Audienz bei der traurenden Kalliste zu gestatten. Friedbert saß frühe auf, Hoffnung und Zweifelmuth spornten den Rappen an, bald zu erfahren, wie seine Geliebte ihn aufnehmen würde; alle Umstände ließen indessen vorläufig vermuten, daß sie ihm den Schleierraub verziehen habe. Mit klopfendem Herzen trat er in die jungfräuliche Zelle ein, das Fräulein saß auf einem Sofa abwärts des Einganges, ihr natürlich gelocktes Haar floß über die Schultern herab und war nur mit einem blauen Bande nachlässig umschlungen. Ihr in sich gekehrter Blick und ihre Miene schienen tiefen Kummer zu verraten, und das Haupt unterstützte ihr schwanenweißer Arm. Sie schien auf den Ankommenden eben nicht groß zu achten; doch ein unerwarteter Fußfall von ihm, ließ eine wichtigere Botschaft als einen mütterlichen Morgengruß oder eine Nachfrage nach ihrem Befinden vermuten; sie schlug die holden Augen auf und erkannte den Fremdling, der ihr zu Füßen lag. Verwunderung und Staunen gaben ihr



eine unwillkürliche Bewegung, sie schreckte auf, gleich einem Rehe, das bei anscheinender Gefahr die Flucht nimmt. Er faßte ihre zarte Hand mit Inbrunst. Sie stieß ihn aber mit zornmütiger Gebärde von sich. »Hinweg von mir, betrüglicher Mann!« sprach sie, »es ist gnug, daß du mich einmal hintergangen hast, den zweiten Raub sollst du nicht an mir begehen!« Friedbert hatte sich dieses Straußes beim Empfang wohl versehen, darum ließ er sich nicht irren, die Apologie seiner verliebten Schalkheit mit der den Liebenden gewöhnlichen Überzeugungsgabe der schönen Kalliste ans Herz zu legen, in welchem er einen gültigen Vorspruch zu finden hoffte. Und weil nichts leichter entschuldigt wird, als Beleidigungen auf Rechnung unbegrenzter Liebe, wenn beide Teile übrigens in der Hauptsache übereinstimmen, gesetzt, daß der Zwist auch ein wichtiger Objekt als einen Schleierraub betraf: so besänftigte sich der Unwille des Fräuleins mit jedem neuen Verteidigungsgrunde immer mehr. Sobald er merkte daß seine Argumente zu Beschönigung des Raubes in ihrem Herzen Eingang fanden, war ihm nicht mehr bange, daß sie ihm nun entwischen würde, weder durch die Tür noch zum Fenster hinaus. Das augenscheinliche Dokument seiner Treue, daß er aus Schwabenland bis in die Zykladen ihr gefolget war, und die Überzeugung ihrerseits, daß er bis an der Welt Ende sie würde aufgesucht haben, erwarb ihm endlich völlige Verzeihung. Das Fräulein tat ihm das Geständnis der Liebe, und die Gelübde, das Los des Lebens mit ihm zu teilen.

Der nach so vielen Schwierigkeiten erlangte Sieg setzte den erhörten Friedbert in solch Entzücken, daß er das Maß seiner Glückseligkeit nicht umfassen konnte. Wonnetrunken eilte er unter der schönen Geleitschaft seiner Geliebten in den mütterlichen Palast zurück. Zoe war über die Maßen verwundert, daß die trübsinnige Kalliste den Vorsatz in der Abgeschiedenheit von der menschlichen Gesellschaft ihre Jugend zu vertrauen so urplötzlich aufgegeben hatte, und mit heittrer Stirn, auf welcher keine Spur der Schwermut mehr zu entdecken war, in ihr Zimmer eintrat. Es fehlte wenig, daß Friedbert nicht zum zweitenmal in den Verdacht einer Zauberei geriet, zumal da die Mutter aus dem Munde der Liebenden vernahm, daß die Präliminarien ihrer untrennbaren Vereinigung so gut als unterzeichnet waren; denn ihr war nicht in den Sinn gekommen, zu gedenken, daß die Gelobung des irrenden Ritters, der Dame seines Herzens einen Ring zu überliefern, auf die Gegensteuer ihres Herzens abziele, vornehmlich da sie vermeinte, ein früherer Kompetent habe davon bereits Posseß ergriffen, und zum Beweistum seiner Gerechtsame schon Feuer auf dem Herde als in seinem Eigentum angezündet. So sehr übrigens Friedbert der Fürstin Günstling war, so wenig vermochte diese Prädilektion über ihre standesmäßigen Vorurteile in Absicht einer gleich edeln Geburt. Ehe sie daher die förmliche Einwilligung zur Vermählung gab, forderte sie den Glücksritter auf, sich einer stiftsmäßigen Ahnenprobe zu unterwerfen. Ob nun wohl zu Naxos so wie überall genealogische Schmiede vorhanden waren, in deren Werkstatt er sich mit leichter Mühe eine ehrene Stammtafel hätte können schmieden lassen, so lang und breit als zu dieser Formalität erforderlich war: so qualifizierte er sich doch mit gutem Bedacht, zu der Fähigkeit in eine so illustre Sippschaft zu gelangen, durch das Zeugnis der Liebe, die wie er sagte, gern Gleiches zu Gleichem paare und nicht Dohlen mit dem Adlergeschlecht, oder Eulen mit dem Straußen gatte. Überdies wies er auf seinen Degen, welcher als der unverwerflichste Zeuge die Ehre seiner Geburt gegen männiglich zu behaupten bereit sei. Gegen die Gültigkeit dieser Beweise fand Zoe nichts einzuwenden, besonders da sie merkte, daß der Fremdling die schöne Kalliste empfindsam gemacht hatte, und in diesem Fall hat eine kluge Mutter keine andere Wahl, wenn sie den goldnen Hausfrieden nicht geflissentlich stören will, als die Wahl der lieben Tochter gut zu heißen, und allen mütterlichen Gerechtsamen, in die Herzensangelegenheiten derselben einzureden, gänzlich zu entsagen.

Fräulein Kalliste stempelte den ehrlichen Friedbert zu einem Tetrarchen von Schwabenland, mit eben dem Rechte, nach welchem der Heilige Stuhl Bischöfe und Prälaten in partibus kreiert, und unter

diesem glänzenden Titel führte sie der Glücksprinz zum Altare, wo sie den ihr gelobten Ring empfing, welchen sie den Tag nach dem Beilager der harrenden Mutter getreulich überlieferte. Der neugeprägte Tetrarch fand nun keinen Anstand weiter, die Geschichte des Ringes der Fürstin Schwiegermutter treuherzig zu eröffnen, wie er durch Erbgangsrecht vermöge des Vermächtnisses des Vater Benno dazu gelangt sei, und bei dieser Gelegenheit erzählte er die ganze Geschichte des ehrwürdigen Einsiedlers. Zoe vergalt diesen aufrichtigen Bericht mit gleicher Offenherzigkeit, und gestund den absichtlichen Hinterlaß des Ringes in ihrem Handschuh am Schwanenteiche, mit dem Beifügen, daß Vater Benno den geheimen Sinn dieser Hieroglyphe sich ganz richtig erklärt, daß es nicht an ihr gelegen habe, den Besuch am Weiher nicht zu wiederholen; sondern ihrem tyrannischen Gemahl sei durch eine schwatzhafte Base von ihrer damaligen Begleitung das Abenteuer verraten worden, er sei darüber so ergrimmt, daß er sich alsbald des magischen Schleiers bemächtigt, und dieses herrliche Geschenk der Natur, in der ersten Wut in tausend Stücken zerrissen habe, wodurch ihr die Rückkehr ins Feienbad sei unmöglich gemacht worden. Die ausharrende Beständigkeit des getreuen Eremiten machte ihr viel Vergnügen und sie belohnte solche durch ein zärtliches Andenken an den guten Benno. Weil sich nun aus der Erzählung des Eidams ergab, daß jener selbst den Schleierraub veranlaßt habe, welcher diesem allerdings zu gutem Glück gediehen war, so erhielt er dafür von der gutherzigen Dame desto leichter völlige Verzeihung, und seine Verdienste um den geliebten Altvater machten ihr den schwäbischen Eidam wert bis an ihren Tod.

Friedbert lebte mit seiner sich immer verjüngenden Gemahlin im Genuß eines Eheglücks, welches heutiges Tages nur in den süßen Idealen schwärmerischer Liebe anzutreffen ist, die das Dornengebüsch der Ehe sich immer als einen Rosengarten abzubilden pfl eget. Kalliste bedauerte nur, daß sie ihren Gemahl des herrlichen Prärogativs des Wunderbades nicht gleichfalls theilhaft machen konnte; denn da sie nach fünf und zwanzig Jahren mit ihm die Silberhochzeit feierte, bleichten schon seine braunen Locken und gewannen an den Spitzen eine Silberfarbe, wie wenn der erste Schnee auf den Hügeln und Bergen die Ankunft des Winters verkündet. Die schöne Kalliste glich dagegen noch immer einer aufblühenden Rose in den Tagen des schönsten Lenzes.

Die Tradition sagt nichts davon, ob das Eheglück des zärtlichen Paares unverrückt fortgedauert habe, da sich in der Folge Winter und Frühling begegneten; oder ob nach dem gewöhnlichen Laufe der Natur bei dem Kampfe zweier entgegengesetzten Jahreszeiten, lieblicher Sonnenschein mit Sturm und Schneegestöber abwechselten. Aber wenn dem Gerücht zu trauen ist, so haben die Lyoner Damen aus keiner andern Ursache die Luftschwimmer so sehr begünstigt, und zum Behuf aerostatischer Versuche so fleißig subskribirt<sup>9</sup>, als der herrlichen Erfindung des Luftballs statt eines Transportschiffes sich zu bedienen, um geschwind und bequem die Reise nach den entlegenen Schönheitsquellen zu unternehmen, und die Wirksamkeit derselben unter Hoffnung genealogischer Begünstigungen zu prüfen, wenn Herr Pilatre von Rozier sich wird erbitten lassen das Steuerruder zu führen.

### **Fußnoten**

1 Eine lustige Gegend bei Zwickau, die noch jetzt diesen Namen führet, und solchen einer alten Volkssage zufolge von einer gewissen Schwanhildis, so wie die Stadt den ihrigen von deren Vater dem Cygnus erhalten haben soll. Beide gehören ins Feiengeschlecht und stammen wahrscheinlich aus den Eiern der Leda her.

2 Glafey's Kern der sächsischen Geschichte. Daß die Sieger die Erschlagenen nach Schocken zählten, wie die Lerchen, kann vielleicht daher kommen, weil die Leipziger Bürger, die sich bei dem Markgrafen

befanden, diesen Heereszug mit einem Lerchenstreichen verglichen; denn der Sieg wurde ihnen sehr leicht.

3 Glafey ist abermals Gewährsmann dieser Anekdote.

4 In diesem Stück hat sich heutzutage der Geschmack zum Vorteil der jungen Herren wie jedermann weiß gar merklich geändert.

5 Auf gut Glück, auf Geratewohl.

6 Nach Tourneforts Zeugnis ist das Tor des Tempels noch zu sehen, wie auch die Kanäle, wodurch der Wein in gewisse Behältnisse gepflegt gebracht zu werden.

7 Zur Zeit da Vater Benno lebte, kannte man nur die drei Teile der alten Welt, der vierte war noch nicht entdeckt.

8 Man sehe das Märchen: Teufel Amor genannt, im vierten und folgendem Teil der Bibliothek der Romanen.

9 Laut öffentlicher Zeitungsnachrichten.

### Het witte eendje

Uit *Sprookjes uit Rusland naverteld door Elisabeth Borchers*; Nederlandse bewerking door Nelly Kunst, Omega Boek, Amsterdam, 1980.

Heel lang geleden leefde er eens een jonge koning met zijn jonge koningin. Ze waren nog maar enkele dagen getrouwd, toen de koning bericht kreeg, dat hij op reis moest.

De koningin huilde van verdriet. De koning was ook bedroefd.

"O, wat zal ik je missen," zei hij. "Beloof me, dat je goed op jezelf zult passen. Ga niet alleen uit. Blijf zoveel mogelijk in je eigen kamer en bemoei je niet met mensen, die je niet kent." Dat beloofde de koningin.

Toen de koning vertrokken was, ging ze naar haar kamer en kwam daar niet meer uit. Na zo'n dag of drie tikte er een vrouwtje op het raam. De koningin opende het raam en keek het vrouwtje met roodbehuilde ogen aan.

"Ach," sprak het vrouwtje vol medelijden, "wat erg voor u, dat de koning nu al op reis is. U bent pas enkele dagen getrouwd. U moet niet meer huilen. Het is veel beter om in uw tuin een wandeling te maken. Kijk toch eens hoe mooi alles bloeit. De koning zou het u ook aanraden, dat weet ik zeker."

De koningin keek naar de bloemen en de zonnige tuinpaden. "Het kan inderdaad geen kwaad een kleine wandeling in de tuin te maken," dacht ze. "Steeds maar huilen maakt me ziek."

"Als u met me meeloopt, lief vrouwtje," zei ze, "dan maken we een wandelingetje." Dat deed het vrouwtje maar al te graag. Samen gingen ze de tuin in en bewonderden de roze en rode rozen. Bij de fontein bleef het vrouwtje staan. Ze zuchtte even en zei: "Het is warmer dan ik dacht, majesteit. Het water van de fontein ziet er zo helder en fris uit. Zullen we ons er even in baden? De koning zou het u vast en zeker ook aanraden."

"Ach ja," dacht de koningin, "zo'n fris bad kan geen kwaad." Ze trok meteen haar kleren uit en stapte in het water. Nauwelijks zat ze erin of ze voelde de hand van het vrouwtje op haar schouder. Het vrouwtje zei: "Word nu een wit eendje en zwem weg."

Opeens was de mooie jonge koningin veranderd in een wit eendje, en het zwom weg. Het vrouwtje grinnikte. Ze trok de kleren van de koningin aan, betoverde haar gezicht, zodat ze op de koningin leek, en liep naar het paleis. In de kamer van de koningin wachtte ze op de terugkomst van de koning.

Enige weken later begonnen de klokken te luiden, als teken dat de koning van zijn reis terugkeerde. De valse koningin liep hem met uitgestrekte armen tegemoet. De koning drukte haar tegen zich aan, blij, dat hij weer thuis was.

Hoe ging het nu verder met het witte eendje? Dat had eieren gelegd en daaruit kropen drie mooie eendjes. Al heel vlug konden ze voor zichzelf zorgen en liepen ze al door het gras. Iedere dag gingen ze een eindje verder.

Op een keer kwamen ze in de tuin van het paleis. De valse koningin zag hen en begreep meteen van wie die mooie eendjes waren. Ze deed heel lief tegen ze en vroeg, of ze het paleis eens wilden zien. Dat wilden de eendjes wel. Ze kregen een heerlijk maal, waarin de valse koningin een slaapmiddel had gedaan. De eendjes konden hun oogjes bijna niet meer open houden. "Kom maar mee," zei de koningin. "Ik leg jullie in een heerlijk zacht bed te slapen. Morgenvroeg maak ik jullie op tijd weer wakker." Maar de valse vrouw dacht: "Als ze slapen, maak ik ze dood."

Midden in de nacht sloop de koningin naar de slaapkamer van de eendjes. Ze klopte op de deur en riep: "Slapen jullie al, of zijn jullie nog wakker?"

Eén van de eendjes riep: "Hoe kunnen wij nu slapen als iemand ons dood wil maken!"

"Ze slapen nog niet," dacht de koningin. Ze ging naar de keuken, maakte daar het vuur aan en hing de ketel erboven. Toen ging ze weer naar de kamer waarin de eendjes sliepen. Ze klopte en riep: "Slapen jullie, of zijn jullie nog wakker?"

Eén van de andere eendjes riep nu: "Hoe kunnen we nu slapen als iemand ons dood wil maken!"

"Ze slapen nog niet," dacht de koningin nijdig. Weer ging ze naar de keuken, pookte het vuur op en hing de ketel goed. Voor de derde keer ging ze naar de slaapkamerdeur. Ze klopte en riep: "Slapen jullie of zijn jullie wakker?"

Het derde eendje riep: "Hoe kunnen we nu slapen als iemand ons dood wil maken!"

De koningin opende zachtjes de deur en zag, dat de eendjes sliepen. Ze begreep, dat ze om de beurt in hun slaap gesproken hadden. Meteen liep ze naar het bed en maakte ze alle drie dood.

Toen het witte eendje de volgende morgen haar kindertjes riep, kwam er niemand te voorschijn. Ze dacht: "O, als er maar niets gebeurd is." Ze vloog naar de tuin van het paleis en daar zag ze haar kindertjes liggen, heel bleek en stil. Verdrietig spreidde ze haar vleugels over haar dode kindjes uit en sprak:

"Lieve kindertjes,  
de koningin die nu in dit paleis woont,  
is een heks.  
Ik ben de echte koningin.  
Ze heeft mij omgetoverd in een wit eendje.  
Ze heeft jullie gedood."

Toevallig stond de jonge koning aan het open venster. "Hoor je dat?" zei hij tegen de koningin, die nog in bed lag. "In de tuin zit een wit eendje, dat kan praten."

"Jaag dat beest weg!" riep de koningin nijdig. "Ik houd niet van witte eenden." Het witte eendje werd weggejaagd, maar even daarna zat het er weer. Verdrietig spreidde ze haar vleugels weer uit over haar dode kindertjes en sprak:

"Lieve kindertjes,  
de koningin die nu in dit paleis woont,  
is een heks.  
Ik ben de echte koningin.  
Ze heeft mij omgetoverd in een wit eendje.  
Ze heeft jullie gedood."

De koning werd nieuwsgierig en haastte zich naar de tuin. Hij knielde bij het witte eendje neer en streelde haar vleugels. Plotseling veranderde het eendje in een spinnewiel. Woedend brak de koning het spinnewiel kapot en wierp één stuk vóór zich neer, en een ander stuk achter zich. Achter hem groeide toen opeens een berkenboom en vóór hem stond zijn koningin. Ze was heel mooi, maar ze huilde. Ze vertelde snikkend wat er allemaal gebeurd was.

De valse koningin was ondertussen weer het vrouwtje geworden, maar nu had ze echt een gezicht, zoals een heks dat meestal heeft.

De koning gaf haar bevel om met haar toverkunst de kindertjes weer levend te maken. Knarsetandend voldeed ze aan dat bevel. Ze liet een ekster voor zich vangen en die moest voor haar levenswater gaan halen. Dit water goot ze over de dode eendjes uit. Die veranderden in echte kinderen. Ze keken naar hun mooie moeder en vader. Van de heks waren ze bang, maar die maakte zich vlug uit de voeten.

Nu was het gezin weer bij elkaar: de koning, de koningin en de kinderen. Ze waren zo blij, dat ze alles vergaten wat er gebeurd was. En ze leefden nog lang en gelukkig.

### De tsarendochter die een grijze eend werd

Uit *Russische Volkssprookjes door A.N. Afanasjew*, Uitgeverij Het Spectrum, Utrecht/Antwerpen, 1964, p. 32-34.

Een tsaar leefde met zijn tsarina en zij hadden twee kinderen: een zoon en een dochter. De zoon heette Dmitri-tsareenzoon en de dochter Marja-tsarendochter. Het kleine meisje had kindermeisjes en minnen bij de vleet, maar niet één daarvan lukte het haar in slaap te wiegen. Alleen haar broer was daartoe in staat; hij kwam dan bij haar bedje en begon te neuriën: "Slaap, slaap, lief zusje! Als je groot bent, zal ik je laten trouwen met Iwan-tsareenzoon!" Dan deed ze haar oogjes dicht en sliep in. Er gingen een aantal jaren voorbij en Dmitri-tsareenzoon bracht een bezoek aan Iwan-tsareenzoon. Hij bleef er drie maanden. Er werden veel spelen gespeeld en er werd veel plezier gemaakt; en toen hij weer vertrok, nodigde hij Iwan-tsareenzoon uit om bij hem te komen. "Goed," zei deze, "ik zal wel eens komen."

Dmitri-tsareenzoon keerde naar huis terug, nam het portret van zijn zuster en hing het boven zijn bed. En de tsarendochter was zo mooi, dat wie het ook zag wel voortdurend naar het portret had willen blijven kijken en er zijn ogen niet van kon afwenden.

Geheel onverwachts kwam Iwan-tsareenzoon zijn bezoek brengen. Hij ging de kamer van Dmitri-tsareenzoon binnen, maar zijn vriend lag vast in slaap. Toen zag hij het portret van Marja-tsarendochter en werd op hetzelfde ogenblik verliefd op haar. Hij trok zijn zwaard en had het al boven haar broer opgeheven. Maar God liet de zonde niet toe: er ging een schok door Dmitri-tsareenzoon, hij werd opeens wakker en vroeg: "Wat wil je doen?" - "Jou doden." - "Waarom, Iwan-tsareenzoon?" - "Dat is toch immers het portret van je verloofde?" - "Nee, van mijn zuster Marja-tsarendochter." - "Ach, waarom heb je me nooit iets over haar verteld? Nu kan ik niet meer zonder haar leven." - "Wat is daar tegen? Trouw met mijn zuster, dan worden we broers." Iwan-tsareenzoon omhelsde Dmitri-tsareenzoon en ze werden het terstond eens. Met handslag werd de belofte bekrachtigd.

Iwan-tsareenzoon reed naar huis om de bruiloft voor te bereiden, en Dmitri-tsareenzoon maakte zich met zijn zuster gereed voor de reis naar de bruidegom. Er werden twee schepen uitgerust: op het ene reisde de broer, op het andere de zuster in gezelschap van haar oude kindermeid met haar dochter. Toen de schepen midden op de blauwe zee voeren, zei de kindermeid tegen Marja-tsarendochter: "Trek toch je kostbare japon uit en ga wat liggen op je veren bed. Dan zul je je beter voelen." De tsarendochter trok de japon uit, maar nauwelijks was ze op het veren bed gaan liggen, of de kindermeid gaf haar een lichte slag op haar blanke lichaam, en Marja-tsarendochter veranderde in een grijze eend, die van het schip opvloog en over de blauwe zee verdween.

Maar de kindermeid doste haar dochter uit in de kostbare japon van de tsarendochter; en toen zaten ze zich met z'n beiden op te blazen van hoogmoed. Zo kwamen ze bij het land van Iwan-tsareenzoon. Hij liep hun terstond tegemoet met het portret van Marja-tsarendochter in zijn hand. Maar toen hij haar aankeek, zag hij dat de bruid in de verste verte niet op het portret leek. Hij werd woedend op Dmitri-tsareenzoon en beval hem in een donkere kerker op te sluiten, en hem iedere dag niet meer dan een hard stuk brood en een beker water te geven. Rondom zijn gevangenis werden wachters geplaatst en het was verboden wie dan ook binnen te laten. Toen het middernacht werd, steeg de grijze eend van de zee op en vloog naar haar broer. In haar vlucht verlichtte ze het gehele land, en bij iedere wieslag was het of er vuur van de hemel druppelde. Ze vloog door het raampje recht de donkere cel binnen, hing haar vleugeltjes aan een spijker en ging naar haar broer: "Ach, mijn lieve broer, Dmitri-tsareenzoon! Wat is

het erg voor je om in het donker te zitten, en niets anders te krijgen dan een beker water en een stukje brood. Maar voor mij is het nog erger om op de blauwe zee te moeten rondzwemmen. De boze kindermeid heeft ons in het ongeluk gestort, ze heeft mij mijn kostbare japon afgenomen en er haar eigen dochter in uitgedost."

Broer en zuster weenden en treurden tezamen. En in de vroege morgen vloog de grijze eend weer weg naar de blauwe zee. Aan Iwan-tsareenzoon werd bericht: zo en zo is het gegaan... Er was een grijze eend naar de gevangenis komen vliegen, en het hele land werd er door verlicht. Iwan-tsareenzoon gaf bevel dat ze het hem terstond moesten laten weten als die eend weer naderde.

Zo werd het opnieuw middernacht. Plotseling kwam de zee in beweging, de grijze eend verhief zich in de lucht en kwam er aan vliegen - het hele land werd door haar verlicht, en bij iedere wiekslag was het of er vuur uit de lucht druppelde. De eend vloog naar de gevangenis, liet haar vleugeltjes bij het raampje achter en ging naar haar broer. Terstond werd Iwan-tsareenzoon gewekt; hij snelde naar de gevangenis en zag in het raam vleugeltjes liggen. Hij greep ze en beval ze in het vuur te verbranden. Toen ging hij met zijn oor tegen de deur staan afluisteren waarover de broer met zijn zuster praatte.

"Lieve, eigen broer," zei Marja-tsarendochter, "het is erg voor jou om in de donkere gevangenis te zitten en niets meer te krijgen dan een beker water en een stukje brood. Maar voor mij is het nog erger om op de blauwe zee te moeten rondzwemmen. De boze kindermeid heeft ons in het ongeluk gestort - ze heeft me mijn kostbare japon afgenomen en er haar dochter mee uitgedost. Ach, broer, het ruikt hier branderig!" - "Nee, zuster, daar merk ik niets van."

Iwan-tsareenzoon opende de gevangenis en ging er binnen. Op datzelfde ogenblik wilde Marja-tsarendochter naar het raampje vluchten, maar ze zag dat haar vleugeltjes half verbrand waren. Toen greep Iwan-tsareenzoon haar bij haar blanke handen, maar zij veranderde in allerlei griezelige dieren. Iwan-tsareenzoon liet zich niet afschrikken en liet haar handen niet los. En tenslotte veranderde ze in een spil; de tsareenzoon brak de spil in tweeën: één stuk wierp hij vóór zich, het andere achter zich met de woorden: "Laat vóór mij een mooi meisje staan, maar achter mij een blanke berkenboom." Achter hem stond werkelijk een blanke berkenboom, en vóór hem stond Marja-tsarendochter, stralend in al haar schoonheid. Iwan-tsareenzoon vroeg Dmitri-tsareenzoon om vergiffenis, en samen gingen ze het paleis binnen. De volgende dag was de bruiloft: Iwan-tsareenzoon trouwde met Marja-tsarendochter. Lange tijd vierden de gasten vrolijk feest. Maar de kindermeid en haar dochter werden naar een oord gezonden, vanwaar er nooit meer iets van hen werd gehoord of vernomen.



### Het sprookje van tsaar Saltan

Uit *Samovarsprookjes – Vertellingen uit het oude Rusland, naverteld door gravin Sybil Schönfeldt, Deltas, Oosterhout, 1998; een sprookje van Poesjkin.*

Er waren eens drie maagden, die aan het venster zaten te spinnen en er lustig op los kletsten.

"Mocht ik tsarina worden," zei de eerste, "dan zou ik een groot bruiloftsmaal voor alle mensen op de wereld organiseren!"

"En mocht ik tsarina worden," merkte de tweede op, "dan zou ik voor alle mensen op de wereld de allerfijnste kant klossen!"

"Ach, mocht ik tsarina worden," zei de jongste, "dan zou ik de tsaar geen geld en goed schenken, maar een zoon met kracht en moed."

Op dat moment knarste de deur van de schuur en tsaar Saltan kwam binnen. Hij had de drie zo horen praten en de woorden van de jongste hadden hem ten zeerste behaagd. "Jij zult mijn vrouw worden!" riep hij uit. "Maar van je zusters hoef je geen afscheid te nemen. De ene kan aan mijn hof kokkin worden en de andere weefster."

Daar waren de twee zusters helemaal niet gelukkig mee, maar ze volgden, eendrachtig verenigd door hun jaloezie, de tsaar en hun jongste zuster naar het tsarenhof.

Nog op dezelfde avond van hun aankomst werd de bruiloft gevierd. Ontelbare gasten kwamen naar het feest en ze aten en dronken en begeleidden de tsaar en zijn bruid naar het huwelijksbed van ivoor. En de wens van de jongste zuster ging onmiddellijk in vervulling: ze werd zwanger van de tsareenzoon.

Niet lang daarna brak er oorlog uit. De tsaar moest afscheid nemen van zijn jonge gade en smeekte haar goed op zichzelf te passen. Zij beloofde het hem, en daar sprong hij al op zijn paard en reed met zijn mannen heen.

Lang bleef hij weg, en lang hadden de kokkin en de weefster de tijd om hun afgunst te koesteren en samen met de oude tante van de tsaar snode plannen uit te broeden.

De tijd verstreek snel, en de tsarina bracht een zoon ter wereld, een groot en sterk prinskind. Verheugd zond zij een bode met de goede tijding naar de tsaar. Maar de kokkin en de weefster onderschepten hem samen met de boosaardige tante, verbrandden de boodschap en gaven de bode in plaats daarvan de volgende brief mee: "De tsarina heeft een monster gebaard."

Toen de tsaar in zijn tent aan het front dit bericht ontving, was hij natuurlijk diepbedroefd. Terstond stuurde hij de bode naar huis met het bevel: "Bewaar het stilzwijgen over alles en wacht tot ik thuiskom en een oordeel vel!" Maar de jaloerse zusters en de tante onderschepten de bode opnieuw, voerden hem dronken en verwisselden het tsarenbevel met een brief die ze van tevoren gemaakt hadden. Daarin stond: "Van tsaar Saltan aan zijn Bojaren: verdrink de tsarina en haar kind in de bodemloze zee!" De Bojaren jammerden en huilden zeer over dit bevel, maar ze drongen 's nachts toch het slaapvertrek van de tsarina

binnen.

Ze lazen haar de valse brief voor en stopten haar en het kind in een ton. Vervolgens spijkerden ze het deksel erop, smeerden alle kieren dicht met werk en teer en rolden hem de zee in...

Vele dagen en weken dobberde de ton over de baren. De stormen raasden, de golven zwiepten hoog op en kwamen weer tot bedaren. De sterren trokken langs de hemel, de maan en de zon volgden elkander op en de tsarevitsj groeide ondertussen als kool in zijn ton. Maar zijn moeder weende en klaagde, zodat hij zong: "Golfje, golfje lief, mijn hartendief, drijf ons snel naar het land en laat ons aanspoelen op het strand!" Dat hoorde de golf en hij spoelde de ton aan land. Weer weende en klaagde de moeder: "We zitten gevangen! Hoe kunnen we ons in 's hemelsnaam ooit uit deze ton bevrijden!" Toen zong de tsarevitsj opnieuw: "Tonnetje ton, lieve gezelschap, open je snel, ik wil in de zon!" De ton viel in duigen en moeder en zoon stapten naar buiten. Om zich heen kijkend, zagen ze dat ze op een onbegroeid eiland waren aangespoeld. Ze klommen van de oever omhoog de heuvel op, waar bovenop een eenzame eik stond.

De maag van de tsarenprins begon te knorren. Van sterke eikentwijgen en een leren riem maakte hij daarom een pijl en boog. Toen hij op zoek ging naar een prooi, hoorde hij plots gekreun en gegil. Rondturend zag hij in de branding een zwaan dobberen, waarboven een havik zweefde. Snel legde hij de pijl aan en trof de roofvogel in de hals. Met een luide kreet als uit een mensenmond stortte de havik omlaag in het bruisende schuim, waarna de zwaan hem met felle slagen van haar vleugels en pikken van haar snavel de genadeslag gaf.

"Dank je wel, tsarenzoon!" riep de zwaan. "Je hebt me uit de macht van het kwaad verlost. Want moet je weten, ik ben een koningsdochter, en de havik was een boosaardige tovenaer. Treur niet om je misgelopen buit! Ik zal het je rijkelijk vergoeden. Ik zal altijd bij je in de buurt blijven en al je wensen in vervulling doen gaan!" Daarop verdween de zwaan uit het zicht, en voor de tsarevitsj en zijn moeder zat er niets anders op dan zich hongerig te slapen te leggen.

Maar bij hun ontwaken de volgende ochtend zagen ze, tot hun immense verbazing, dat er op het kale, lege strand een grote, luisterrijke stad was ontstaan, met gouden koepels en torens en omringd door een witte muur.

"Kijk daar eens, moeder!" riep de tsarevitsj. "Moet je zien wat mijn zwaan ons geschonken heeft!"

Nauwelijks waren ze onder de poort door gegaan, of alle klokken begonnen te luiden. Feestelijk uitgedoste mensen kwamen hen tegemoet gelopen. Ze riepen de tsarenzoon uit tot hun vorst, zetten hem een kroon op het hoofd en brachten hem naar het kasteel.

Van die dag af heerste de tsarenprins over het land, en men noemde hem vorst Guido.

Op zekere dag woei de wind van over de zee en dreef een schip op het land. Het scheepsvolk verbaasde zich er ten eerste over op het onherbergzame eiland een nieuwe stad met torens en kantelen aan te treffen. De varengasten werden met kanonschoten begroet en lieten zich graag onthalen en laven. Tegen vorst Guido vertelden ze dat ze pelshandelaren waren en zich op weg naar de machtige tsaar Saltan

bevonden. De vorst verzocht hun daarop de tsaar zijn groeten over te brengen, begeleidde de kooplieden naar de oever en tuurde hen na.

De branding schuimde, en de zwaan dook weer op. "Wat stemt je zo verdrietig, mijn vorst?" vroeg ze.

"Ach, ik zou dolgraag naar mijn vader toe willen!" antwoordde hij vurig.

"Meer wens je niet?" vroeg de zwaan. "Volg dan het schip! Vlieg je geluk tegemoet in de vermomming van een mug!"

Zo geschiedde. De mug bereikte het handelsschip, hield zich gedurende de dagen en weken van de vaart verborgen in een holte in de mast en kwam uiteindelijk met de pelshandelaren in het tsarenslot aan. Daar werden ze met muziek en een feestbanket onthaald. Tsaar Saltan zat echter met een somber gelaat tussen de kokkin en de weefster in, de oude tante zat aan zijn voeten. Hij beval de handelaren over hun reis te vertellen.

Daarop verhaalden ze over de magnifieke, nieuwe stad met haar paleizen en tuinen, die op het kale eiland verrezen was, over vorst Guido op zijn gouden troon en brachten zoals opgedragen zijn groeten over.

"Mocht ik het leven hebben," verzuchtte de tsaar, "dan zou ik graag deze stad eens zelf in ogenschouw nemen." De zusters werden echter door jaloezie en nijd overweldigd, en de kokkin schreeuwde woedend: "Dat loont de reis niet! Ik weet een veel groter wonder: diep in een woud woont in een dennenboom een eekhoortje dat zingt en noten kraakt. Van goud zijn de schillen, van smaragd de kernen!" Toen dook de mug zoemend voor haar gezicht op, stak de kokkin in het ooglid - en nog voordat het kon opzwellen was hij al weer over de blauwe zee weggevlogen en verdwenen.

De volgende ochtend wandelde vorst Guido over het strand langs de zee.

De zwaan kwam uit de golven opgedoken en vroeg waarom hij zo bedroefd was.

"Ach," antwoordde de vorst, "ik had dolgraag zo'n eekhoortje willen hebben als de kokkin beschreven heeft."

"Meer wens je niet?" vroeg de zwaan. "Ga huiswaarts, daar vind je het."

En inderdaad, in de tuin van zijn paleis was een hoge den opgeschoten, waarin het eekhoortje zat te zingen en gouden noten met smaragden kernen kraakte. Uitzinnig van blijdschap liet vorst Guido een kristallen kooi voor het diertje bouwen en gaf een schrijverklerk opdracht elke noot te noteren.

Op zekere dag kwam de wind opnieuw van zee gewaaid en bracht wederom een schip aan land. Ook deze handelaren waren op weg naar tsaar Saltan, en vorst Guido droeg hun op, de tsaar zijn groeten over te brengen. Ditmaal volgde hij de zeelieden vermomd als vlieg. Toen de handelaren aan het hof van de tsaar vertelden over de prachtige stad op het eiland en het eekhoortje dat gouden noten kraakte, zei de tsaar eens te meer: "Mocht ik het leven hebben, dan zou ik graag deze stad eens zelf in ogenschouw nemen."

Daarop barstten de zusters in woede uit, en de weefster voegde eraan toe: "Dat loont de reis niet! Ik weet een veel groter wonder: daar hoog boven in de wilde Noordzee verheft zich een kaal strand uit de deinende golven, waar als bliksemschichten drieëndertig ridders tevoorschijn komen onder aanvoering van Tsjernomor."

Vertoornd stak de vlieg de weefster in het oog, maar nog voordat het met blindheid was geslagen, was de vlieg al weer over de blauwe zee verdwenen.

De dag daarop deed vorst Guido de zwaan relaas van de woorden van de weefster, en zij vervulde ook deze wens van hem: ogenblikkelijk kwamen er wilde golven op, drieëndertig ridders sprongen tevoorschijn uit het schuim, trokken de stad in en boden Guido hun diensten aan.

Een derde maal dreef de wind een schip op het strand aan. Vol bewondering namen de zeelieden de stad, het eekhoorntje en de drieëndertig ridders in ogenschouw en vertelden het bij hun terugkeer aan de tsaar. Vorst Guido was hen gevolgd in de gedaante van een wesp. Opnieuw uitte de tsaar de wens al deze wonderen met eigen ogen te aanschouwen. En de drie boosaardige vrouwen werden wederom door jaloezie gegrepen, waarop de oude tante uitriep: "Dat loont de reis niet! Ik weet een veel groter wonder: een tsarendochter woont ver over de zee, zo wonderschoon is zij, dat zij overdag het licht in haar schaduw stelt en 's nachts fonkelt als een zon! Als de maneschijn glanst haar haar in de omtrek ver, haar voorhoofd gelijk een ster!"

Toen stak de wesp de tante in de neus en maakte dat hij wegwam.

De volgende ochtend wandelde vorst Guido bedroefd over het zeestrand, en toen de zwaan opdook en naar de reden voor zijn kummernis vroeg, antwoordde hij: "De tsarendochter, over wie de tante sprak, zou ik graag tot vrouw hebben, en geen ander, al moest ik ervoor naar het eind van de wereld lopen!"

Daarop zuchtte de zwaan en zei: "Dat hoef je niet, want ik ben de tsarendochter!" Het verenkleed viel van haar af, en zij was nog mooier dan alle woorden zouden kunnen beschrijven.

Verheugd gaf de tsarina haar zoon en de zwanenjonkvrouw haar zegen, maar de twee waren nog maar nauwelijks getrouwd, of de wind dreef voor de zoveelste maal een schip op het land aan.

De kooplieden zagen het wonder van de stad, het eekhoorntje, de drieëndertig ridders en de zwanenjonkvrouw en vertrokken om er de tsaar over te berichten. De vorst bleef deze keer thuis.

Tsaar Saltan liet zich nu niet meer tegenhouden door de drie kwaadaardige vrouwen. Hij zeilde met een grote vloot over de zee naar de stad op het eiland en werd met alle eerbetoon ontvangen.

De vorst wandelde hem tegemoet, en de tsaar herkende aan zijn zijde zijn beminde vrouw. Toen wist hij dat vorst Guido zijn verloren gewaande zoon was en sloot hem dolzinnig van vreugde in de armen.

En omdat hij zo gelukkig was, vergaf hij het de twee zusters en zijn oude tante, maar nooit stond hij hun toe op het wonderbaarlijke eiland van de zwanenjonkvrouw te verschijnen.

Zelf bleef hij daar echter, en allen vierden een feest, dat dagen en weken duurde. En zo ze nog niet gestorven zijn, vieren ze het vandaag nog altijd.

## De wilde zwanen

Uit *Hans Christian Andersen – Sprookjes en verhalen, opnieuw uit het Deens vertaald door Dr. Annelies van Hees*, Uitgeverij Lemniscaat, Rotterdam, 1997.

Ver hiervandaan, daar waarheen de zwaluwen vliegen als het bij ons winter is, woonde een koning en die had elf zonen en één dochter, Elisa. De elf broers, de prinsen, gingen naar school met een ster op de borst en een sabel opzij; ze schreven op een gouden lei met een diamanten griffel; ze konden net zo goed van buiten als van binnen leren;

O, wat hadden de kinderen het goed, maar zo zou het niet altijd blijven!

Hun vader, die koning was over het hele land, trouwde met een boze koningin die helemaal niet goed was voor de arme kinderen; de eerste dag was het al goed te merken: op het slot was er groot feest en de kinderen speelden "visite"; anders kregen ze zoveel koekjes en appelbollen als ze lustten, maar nu gaf zij hun alleen maar wat zand in een theekopje en zei dat ze maar moesten doen alsof er thee in zat.

De week daarop deed ze het zusje Elisa bij boerenmensen in de kost, en het duurde niet lang of ze wist de koning zoveel slechts over die arme prinsjes wijs te maken dat hij niets meer om hen gaf.

"Vlieg maar weg, de wereld in, en zorg voor je zelf!" zei de boze koningin. "Vlieg als grote vogels, zonder stem!" Maar ze kon het toch niet zo erg maken als ze wel wilde. Ze werden tot prachtige, wilde zwanen die met een wonderlijke kreet uit de vensters van het slot naar buiten vlogen over park en bos. Het was nog heel vroeg in de morgen toen zij voorbij het boerenhuis kwamen waar Elisa, hun zusje, lag te slapen. Hier zweefden ze over het dak, draaiden met hun lange hals en sloegen met hun vleugels. Ze moesten weer verder, hoog in de wolken, ver weg de wijde wereld in, daar vlogen ze een groot, donker bos in dat zich helemaal tot aan het strand uitstreckte.

De arme kleine Elisa stond in het kamertje van de boer met een groen blad te spelen en ze maakte een gat in het blad, keek daardoorheen naar de zon. En toen was het of ze de heldere ogen van haar broers zag, en telkens als de warme zonnestralen op haar wang schenen was het of zij haar kusten.

De ene dag verliep als de andere. Wanneer de wind blies door de hoge rozenhagen om het huis fluisterde hij tot de rozen: "Wie zou er mooier zijn dan jullie?" Maar de rozen schudden het hoofd en zeiden: "Dat is Elisa!"

Toen ze vijftien jaar was moest ze naar huis; en toen de koningin merkte hoe mooi ze was geworden, had ze geen vriendelijk woord meer voor haar over; ze had haar graag in een wilde zwaan veranderd, net als de broers, maar dat durfde ze niet dadelijk te doen omdat de koning zijn dochter wilde zien. Vroeg in de morgen ging de koningin naar het badhuis dat geheel van marmer was en waar zachte kussens en heerlijke tapijten lagen, en ze nam drie padden, kuste ze en zei tot de eerste: "Ga op Elisa's hoofd zitten, wanneer zij in 't bad gaat, opdat zij net zo'n botterik wordt als jij!" "Ga op haar voorhoofd zitten," zei ze tot de tweede, "opdat ze net zo'n lelijkerd wordt als jij, zodat haar vader haar niet herkent!" "Ga zitten op haar hart," fluisterde ze tot de derde, "maak haar slecht opdat zij weet wat kwelling is!" Toen zette zij de padden in het heldere water dat dadelijk een groenachtige kleur aannam, ze riep Elisa, kleepte haar uit, hielp haar in het water en, terwijl het meisje onderdook, ging de ene pad

in haar haar zitten, de andere op haar voorhoofd en de derde op haar borst, maar Elisa scheen daar niets van te merken. Zodra ze bovenkwam dreven er drie rode papavers op het water; als de beesten niet giftig waren geweest en door de heks gekust, zouden ze in rode rozen zijn veranderd, maar bloemen werden ze toch, omdat ze Elisa's hoofd en haar hart hadden aangeraakt: ze was te vroom en te onschuldig dat de betovering macht over haar zou kunnen krijgen.

Toen de oude koningin dat zag wreef ze Elisa in met notensap, zodat ze helemaal donkerbruin werd, ze smeerde haar lief gezichtje in met een stinkende zalf en bracht haar mooie haar helemaal in de war: het was onmogelijk de schone Elisa te herkennen. Toen haar vader haar zo zag, schrok hij dan ook verschrikkelijk en hij zei dat dit zijn dochter niet was; niemand wilde nog iets van haar weten, behalve de waakhond en de zwaluwen.

Toen huilde de arme Elisa en dacht aan haar elf broers die allen weg waren. Ze sloop bedroefd het slot uit, liep de hele dag over veld en heide en toen het grote bos in. Zij wist helemaal niet waar zij heen zou gaan, maar ze voelde zich zo bedroefd en verlangde zo naar haar broers; die waren zeker ook, net als zij, de wijde wereld ingejaagd; hen wilde zij zoeken én vinden.

Ze was nog maar kort in het bos toen de nacht inviel, ze was helemaal verdwaald. Toen ging ze op het zachte mos liggen, ze bad haar avondgebed en leunde met haar hoofdje tegen een boomstronk. Het was er zo stil, de lucht zo zacht, en rondom op het gras en mos, blonken wel over de honderd glimwormpjes als groene lichtjes; toen ze met de hand zacht een tak aanraakte vielen de lichtende diertjes als verschietende sterren op haar neer.

De hele nacht droomde zij van haar broers — ze speelden weer met elkaar als kinderen, schreven met een diamanten griffel op gouden leien en keken in het prachtige prentenboek, dat een half koninkrijk had gekost; maar op de lei schreven ze niet, zoals vroeger, alleen maar nulletjes en streepjes, nee, ze schreven over de stout-moedigste daden die zij hadden bedreven, en in het prentenboek begon alles te leven, de vogels zongen en de mensen liepen uit het boek weg en spraken tot Elisa en tot haar broers, maar wanneer ze het blad omsloeg sprongen ze er dadelijk weer in, opdat de prenten niet in de war zouden raken.

Toen zij wakker werd stond de zon al hoog aan de hemel; ze kon haar wel niet zien door de dichte dikke takken van de hoge bomen, maar de stralen tintelden als bewegelijk goudgaas; er was een geur van groenheid en de vogels gingen bijna op haar schouders zitten. Zij hoorde het water plassen: er waren heel wat grote bronnen die alle uitstroonden in een vijver; deze had een prachtige zandbodem. Er groeiden wel dichte bosjes omheen, maar op één plek hadden de herten een grote opening gemaakt en hierdoor ging Elisa naar het water. Het was zo helder dat, als de wind niet takken en bosjes had bewogen, men zou geloven dat ze op de bodem waren geschilderd. Zo duidelijk weerspiegelde zich elk blad in het water — het blad in de zon en het blad in de schaduw.

Toen ze haar gezicht zag, schrok ze hevig, zo bruin en lelijk was het. Maar toen ze haar handje nat maakte en over ogen en voorhoofd wreef, kwam het blanke vel weer te voorschijn; toen kleepte zij zich uit en sprong in het frisse water; een liefelijker koningskind dan zij bestond er niet op de wereld. Toen zij zich weer had aangekleed en haar lange haar had gevlochten, ging ze naar de borrelende bron. Ze dronk uit haar holle hand en ging toen weer dieper het bos in, zonder zelf te weten waarheen. Ze dacht aan haar broers, dacht aan de goede God die haar zeker niet zou verlaten: Hij liet immers wilde appels

groeien om de hongerige te spijsigen; Hij wees haar zo'n boom, de takken bogen neer van al de vruchten; daar hield ze haar middagmaal, toen stutte ze de takken en ze ging het donkerste deel van het bos in. Daar was het zó stil dat ze haar eigen voetstappen hoorde en elk verdord blaadje dat onder haar voeten vertrapt werd. De hoge stammen stonden zó dicht bij elkaar dat het net was of het ene balkenhek na het andere haar omringde. O, hier was een eenzaamheid die ze nooit tevoren gekend had.

De nacht werd zeer donker, niet één klein glimwormpje gloeide op het mos; ze legde zich bedroefd te slapen. Toen leek het haar alsof de takken van de bomen boven haar uiteengingen en Onze Lieve Heer met milde ogen op haar neerkeek; en kleine engelenkopjes gluurden boven Zijn hoofd en onder Zijn armen uit.

Toen ze de volgende morgen wakker werd wist ze niet, of ze het had gedroomd of dat het werkelijkheid was.

Ze liep enige passen verder, toen ontmoette ze een oude vrouw met een mand bessen, de oude gaf haar er een paar. Elisa vroeg of ze niet elf prinsesjes door het bos had zien rijden.

"Nee," zei de oude, "maar ik zag gisteren elf zwanen met gouden kroontjes, hier vlakbij de rivier af zwemmen!"

En zij leidde Elisa een eind verder naar een helling; daarbeneden kronkelde een rivier. De bomen langs de oevers sloegen hun lange bladertakken ineens en waar zij elkaar niet zo konden bereiken, daar hadden ze hun wortels uit de aarde losgerukt en bogen ze zich over het water met ineengestremde takken.

Elisa zei de oude vrouw gedag en liep stroomafwaarts langs de rivier tot waar deze uitstroomde in de grote, open zee.

Daar lag nu de wijde zee voor haar; maar er was niet één zeilschip te zien en niet één boot: hoe kwam ze nu verder. Ze bekeek de talloze steentjes aan de oever; het water had ze allemaal rond geslepen. Glas, ijzer, steen, alles wat daar was aangespoeld, was gevormd door het water, dat toch heel wat zachter was dan haar eigen, fijne handje. "Dat rolt maar door, en slijpt alle hoeken rond, ik wil net zo zijn! Dank voor de les, heldere, rollende golven; eenmaal, dat zegt mijn hart, zullen jullie me dragen naar mijn lieve broers!"

Op het aangespoelde wier lagen elf witte zwanenveren; ze verzamelde ze in een boekje, er lagen waterdruppeltjes op, of het nu dauw of tranen waren, dat kon niemand zien. Eenzaam was het aan het strand, maar ze merkte het niet, want de zee veranderde steeds, ja, in enkele uren meer dan de binnenmeren in een heel jaar. Kwam er een grote, zwarte wolk, dan was het alsof de zee wilde zeggen: ik kan er ook somber uitzien, en dan naderde de wind weer en verschenen er witte koppen op de golven; maar sliep de wind en straalden de wolken in rode glans, dan was de zee als een rozenblad, dan werd ze groen, dan weer wit, maar hoe rustig en stil de zee ook was, toch stond er aan het strand een zachte deining; het water ging op en neer als de borst van een slapend kind.

Toen de zon onderging zag Elisa elf wilde zwanen met gouden kronen op het hoofd landwaarts vliegen. De een na de ander kwamen zij aanzweven als een lang, wit lint; toen klom Elisa de helling op en



verschool zich achter een bosje; de zwanen kwamen vlak bij haar zitten en sloegen met hun grote, witte vleugels.

Toen de zon onder was viel opeens de zwanenhuid af en daar stonden elf schone prinses: Elisa's broers. Zij slaakte een luide kreet want hoewel ze sterk waren veranderd herkende zij hen toch, zij voelde dat ze het moesten zijn; ze sprong in hun armen, noemde hen bij hun naam. En ze waren o, zo gelukkig toen ze hun zusje, zo groot en mooi geworden, herkenden. Ze lachten en huilden en al heel gauw wisten ze van elkaar hoe slecht hun stiefmoeder hen had behandeld.

"Wij broers," zei de oudste, "vliegen als wilde zwanen zolang de zon aan de hemel staat; zodra ze onder is worden we weer mens; daarom moeten we bij zonsondergang ervoor oppassen dat we grond onder de voeten krijgen; want als we dan hoog in de wolken zouden vliegen zouden we ook, als mensen, in de diepte storten. Hier wonen we niet; net zo'n mooi land als dit ligt aan de overkant van de zee; maar de weg daarheen is lang, we moeten de grote zee over en op onze weg ligt geen enkel eiland waar we kunnen overnachten. Eén eenzame klip steekt midden in de zee boven 't water uit; die is net groot genoeg dat wij er dicht aaneengesloten, op kunnen uitrusten; staat er een zware deining, dan spatten de golven hoog over ons heen; maar toch danken wij God ervoor. Daar overnachten wij in menselijke gedaante; zonder die klip zou 't ons niet mogelijk zijn ons vaderland te bezoeken, want om daarheen te vliegen hebben we de twee langste dagen van 't jaar nodig. Slechts één keer in 't jaar is 't ons vergund ons geboorteland te bezoeken, elf dagen mogen we hier blijven en over dat grote bos vliegen, vanwaar wij 't slot kunnen zien waar wij geboren werden en waar onze vader woont, waar wij de hoge toren kunnen zien van de kerk waar onze moeder begraven ligt. Hier zijn bomen en struiken met ons verwant, hier lopen wilde paarden over de vlakten, zoals wij ze zagen toen wij kinderen waren, hier zingt de kolenbrander 't oude lied waarop wij dansten toen wij klein waren, hier is ons vaderland, hierheen drijft ons verlangen ons en hier hebben wij jou gevonden, lief zusje! Twee dagen mogen we nog hier blijven, dan moeten we weer weg over de zee naar een prachtig land, dat ons vaderland niet is! Hoe krijgen we jou mee? Wij hebben geen schip en geen boot!"

"Hoe kan ik jullie bevrijden?" zei het zusje.

En bijna de hele nacht door praatten ze samen; zij sliepen slechts enkele uren. Elisa werd wakker van het geluid van zwanenvleugels die boven haar klaptten. De broers hadden weer de gedaante van een vogel aangenomen en vlogen nu eerst in grote kringen rond en toen ver weg. Maar een van hen, de jongste, bleef achter; en de zwaan legde zijn hoofd in haar schoot, en zij streelde zijn witte vleugels; de hele dag waren zij samen. Tegen de avond kwamen de andere terug en toen de zon was ondergegaan werden ze weer mensen.

"Morgen vliegen we hiervandaan en we mogen niet terugkomen, vóór een heel jaar om is; maar jou kunnen we toch hier niet laten! Heb je de moed om mee te gaan? Mijn arm is sterk genoeg om je door 't bos te dragen, zouden onze vleugels samen niet sterk genoeg zijn om met jou over de zee te vliegen?"

"Ja, neem me mee!" zei Elisa.

De hele nacht vlochten ze aan een net van buigzame wilgenbast en taai riet, en het werd groot en sterk; daar ging Elisa op liggen. En toen de zon was opgekomen en de broers weer in zwanen waren veranderd, pakten ze met hun snavel het net beet en vlogen ze met hun slapend zusje de wolken in. De zonnestralen

schenen haar vlak in het gezicht en daarom vloog een der zwanen boven haar hoofd, opdat zijn brede vleugels schaduw konden geven.

Ze waren al een eind op weg toen Elisa ontwaakte; zij dacht dat ze nog droomde, zo wonderlijk leek het haar hoog in de lucht over de zee te worden gedragen. Naast haar lag een tak met heerlijke, rijpe bessen en een bos lekkere wortelen, die de jongste broer had verzameld en voor haar neergelegd, en zij glimlachte dankbaar naar hem, want ze merkte dat hij het was die boven haar vloog en met zijn vleugels schaduw gaf.

Ze waren nu zo hoog dat het eerste schip, dat ze onder zich zagen, een witte meeuw leek die op het water lag. Achter hen was een grote wolk, een hele berg, en op die wolk zag Elisa haar eigen schaduw en die van de elf zwanen: reusachtig groot vlogen zij daar; het was een schilderij, indrukwekkender dan zij ooit had gezien; maar naarmate de zon steeg en de wolk achterbleef, verdween dat zwevende schaduwbeeld.

De hele dag vlogen ze suizend als een pijl door de lucht, maar toch moest het langzamer gaan dan anders, want nu hadden ze hun zusje te dragen. Er kwam een zwaar onweer opzetten, de avond begon te vallen; angstig merkte Elisa hoe de zon daalde en nog steeds kregen zij niet de eenzame klip in de zee in het oog. Het leek haar of de zwanen krachtiger met hun vleugels sloegen. Och! het was haar schuld dat ze niet snel genoeg vooruitkwamen; zodra de zon onder was zouden ze in mensen veranderen en in de zee vallen en verdrinken. Toen bad zij uit het diepst van haar hart tot God maar nog steeds zag zij geen klip; de zwarte onweerswolk kwam nader, een krachtige windstoot kondigde een storm aan, de wolken leken één grote dreigende golf die loodzwaar op hen aanrolde; de ene bliksemstraal flikkerde na de andere. Nu raakte de zon de rand van de zee. Elisa's hartje beefde; toen schoten de zwanen zo snel naar beneden dat zij dacht te vallen; maar nu zweefden zij weer. De zon was al tot de helft in het water toen ze de kleine klip onder zich in het oog kreeg, die eruitzag alsof zij niet groter was dan een zeehond die zijn kop uit het water opsteekt. De zon zonk snel, nu was zij niet veel meer dan een ster; toen raakte haar voetje vaste grond en de zon doofde uit als een laatste vonk brandend papier. En ze zag arm in arm de broers om zich heen staan; maar meer plaats dan net precies voor hen en voor haar, was er zeker niet. De zee sloeg tegen de klip aan en viel als een stortregen over hen heen; de hemel was één en al vuur en de ene slag volgde op de andere. Maar zusje en broers hielden elkaar bij de hand en zongen een gezang, waaruit ze troost en moed putten.

Bij het aanbreken van de dag was de lucht helder en stil; zodra de zon steeg vlogen de zwanen met Elisa van het eiland weg. Er stond een hoge zee; het leek toen ze hoog in de lucht waren of de witte schuimkoppen als miljoenen zwanen op de zwartgroene zee zwommen.

Toen de zon hoger kwam zag Elisa voor zich uit, half zwevend in de lucht, een bergland met blinkend-witte ijsmassa's op de hoogvlakten en daarboven, in het midden verhief zich een slot, zeker wel mijlenlang, met de ene trotse zuilengalerij boven de andere; aan de voet wuifden palmbossen en sierbloemen, zo groot als molenstenen.

Zij vroeg of dat het land was waar ze heengingen maar de zwanen schudden hun hoofd: wat ze nu zag was niets dan Fata Morgana's altijd wisselend luchtkasteel; daarheen durfden ze niemand te brengen. Elisa staarde ernaar; plotseling stortten bergen, bossen en slot ineens en stonden daar twintig trotse kerken, alle aan elkaar gelijk, met hoge torens en spitse vensters. Ze meende het orgel te horen spelen,

maar het was de zee. Nu was ze vlak bij de kerken, toen werden ze ineens tot een hele vloot die onder haar voer; ze keek naar beneden en nu was het niets dan zeedamp die over het water joeg. Wat een afwisselende vergezichten had zij, vóór zij eindelijk het land in zicht kreeg waar ze heengingen. Daar verhieven zich prachtige, blauwe bergen met cederbossen, steden en kastelen. Lang voor de zon onderging zat zij op de hoogvlakte voor een grote grot, die begroeid was met fijne, groene slingerplanten als geborduurde wandkleden.

"Nu zullen we eens zien, waarvan je hier vannacht zult dromen!" zei de jongste broer en hij wees haar haar slaapkamer.

"Ik wou dat ik droomde hoe ik jullie kon bevrijden!" zei ze; die gedachte hield haar erg bezig. Zij bad innig tot God om hulp en zelfs in haar slaap bleef ze door bidden. Het leek haar alsof ze hoog in de lucht vloog naar Fata Morgana's luchtkasteel, en een fee trad haar tegemoet, mooi en stralend, en toch leek ze weer erg op de oude vrouw die haar bessen had gegeven in het bos en haar had verteld van de zwanen met de gouden kroontjes. "Je broers kunnen bevrijd worden!" zei ze, "maar heb je moed en uithoudingsvermogen? Wel is de zee zachter dan je fijne handjes en toch kan zij de hardste stenen vervormen, maar zij voelt de pijn niet die jouw vingertjes zouden voelen; ze heeft geen hart, lijdt geen angst en wordt door niets gekweld, zoals jij! Zie je die brandnetel die ik in mijn hand houd? Van dat soort groeien er vele rondom de grot, waar je slaapt; alleen maar deze hier, en diegene, die op de graven der kerkhoven opschieten, zijn bruikbaar, denk daar goed om; die moet je plukken, al zullen ze je huid ook vol blaren branden; stamp de netels met je voetjes stuk, dan krijg je vlas; en van dat vlas moet je elf hemden weven, met lange mouwen, werp die over de elf witte zwanen, dan is 't uit met de betovering. Maar denk er goed om, dat je van 't ogenblik af, dat je met dit werk begint, totdat 't volbracht is, al zouden er ook jaren tussen liggen, niet spreken mag; het eerste woord, dat je zegt, zou het hart van je broers treffen; hun leven hangt van jouw zwijgen af. Denk daar wel om!"

En op hetzelfde ogenblik raakte zij met de netel haar hand aan; 't was als brandend vuur; Elisa werd er wakker van.

Het was klaar dag en dicht bij de plaats, waar ze geslapen had, lag een brandnetel, net zo een als ze in de droom gezien had. Toen viel ze op haar knieën, ze dankte God en ging de grot uit om aan haar werk te beginnen.

Met haar fijne handjes greep ze in de lelijke netels die brandden als vuur; grote blaren kwamen op haar handen en armen; maar dat had ze er graag voor over als zij op deze wijze haar lieve broers kon bevrijden. Elke netel trad zij met haar blote voeten en ze spon het groene vlas.

Toen de zon was ondergegaan kwamen de broers. Zij schrokken erg toen ze haar zo zwijgend aantroffen; ze dachten dat het een nieuwe betovering was van hun boze stiefmoeder; maar toen ze haar handen zagen begrepen ze wat ze ter wille van hen deed. En de jongste broer hilde en waar zijn tranen vielen, daar voelde zij geen pijn, daar verdwenen de brandende blaren.

De nacht werkte zij door want ze had nu geen rust vóór ze haar broers bevrijd had; de hele volgende dag, terwijl de zwanen weg waren, zat zij daar in haar eentje maar nooit was de tijd zo snel gegaan. Eén hemd was al klaar; nu begon ze aan het volgende.

Daar klonk een jachthoorn in de bergen. Zij werd angstig; het geluid kwam nader en zij hoorde honden blaffen; verschrikt trok zij zich in de grot terug. Ze bond de netels die zij had verzameld en gehegeld in een bos en ging daarop zitten.

Op hetzelfde ogenblik kwam een grote hond uit het struikgewas springen en onmiddellijk daarop weer een en weer een; ze blaften hard, liepen weg en kwamen terug. Het duurde niet lang of alle jagers stonden voor de grot en de mooiste onder hen was de koning van het land; hij trad op Elisa toe, nooit had hij zo'n mooi meisje gezien.

"Hoe kom jij hier, lief kind!" zei hij. Elisa schudde haar hoofd, zij durfde niet te spreken, het ging om het leven en de vrijheid van haar broers. Zij verborg haar handen onder haar schort, dat de koning niet zag wat zij moest lijden.

"Ga met mij mee," zei hij, "hier kun je niet blijven! Ben je zo goed als je mooi bent, dan zal ik je kleden in zijde en fluweel, je een gouden kroon op 't hoofd zetten en zal je wonen op mijn kostbaarste slot!" En toen tilde hij haar op zijn paard; zij huilde en wrong haar handen, maar de koning zei: "Ik wil alleen maar je geluk! Eenmaal zul je mij daar dankbaar voor zijn!" Toen reed hij weg door de bergen met haar vóór zich op zijn paard, en de jagers joegen achter hen aan.

Toen de zon onderging lag de prachtige koningsstad met kerken en koepels voor hen, en de koning leidde haar het slot binnen waar grote fonteinen klaterden in hoge, marmeren zalen, waar de muren en zolderingen rijk beschilderd waren. Maar daar had ze geen oog voor, ze huilde en treurde; willoos liet ze toe dat vrouwen haar koningskleden aantrokken, haar parelen in het haar vlochten en haar fijne handschoenen over de verbrande vingers trokken. Toen ze daar stond in al die pracht was ze zo verblindend mooi, dat het hof nog dieper voor haar boog. De koning verkoos haar tot zijn bruid, hoewel de aartsbisschop met het hoofd schudde en fluisterde dat dit mooie bosmeisje zeker een heks was. Zij verblindde hun ogen en betoverde het hart van de koning.

Maar de koning luisterde niet. Hij liet de muziek spelen, de kostelijkste gerechten opdragen. De mooiste meisjes dansten om haar heen en door geurende tuinen ging het naar prachtige zalen; maar er kwam geen glimlach om haar mond of in haar ogen. Daar stond een eindeloos verdriet. Nu ontsloot de koning een kamertje waar zij zou slapen; het was behangen met kostbare groene tapijten en leek veel op de grot waar zij had gewoond. Op de grond lag de bundel vlas die zij van de netels gesponnen had en van de zoldering hing het hemd dat reeds geweven was; dit alles had een van de jagers meegenomen als een merkwaardigheid. "Hier kun je dromen en denken dat je in je oude huis bent!" zei de koning. "Hier is het werk waar je mee bezig was, nu, midden in al deze pracht, zal je zeker met plezier aan die tijd terugdenken."

Toen Elisa zag wat haar zo na aan het hart lag, glimlachte ze en het bloed keerde in haar wangen terug; zij dacht aan de bevrijding van haar broers en kuste de hand van de koning, en hij drukte haar aan zijn hart en liet alle kerkklokken het bruiloftsfeest verkondigen. Het lieve, stomme meisje uit het bos werd nu koningin van het land.

Toen fluisterde de aartsbisschop boze woorden in het oor van de koning, maar ze drongen niet tot zijn hart door. De bruiloft ging door, de aartsbisschop zelf moest haar de kroon op 't hoofd zetten. En met

boze opzet drukte hij de nauwe ring diep over haar voorhoofd, zodat het pijn deed; maar er lag een nog zwaardere ring om haar hart, de zorg over haar broers; de lichamelijke pijn voelde zij niet. Haar mond was stom, één woord zou haar broers het leven kosten, maar in haar ogen stond een diepe liefde voor de goede knappe koning die alles deed om haar blij te maken. Elke dag hield zij meer van hem; kon zij hem maar in vertrouwen nemen, hem haar lijden vertellen; maar geen woord mocht ze spreken en stil moest zij haar werk afmaken. Daarom sloop zij 's nachts van zijn zijde weg, ging het kleine verborgen kamertje binnen dat was ingericht als de grot en weefde het ene hemd na het andere. Maar toen zij met het zevende begon had zij geen vlas meer.

Op het kerkhof, wist zij, groeiden de netels die ze voor haar werk nodig had maar ze moest ze zelf plukken; hoe kon zij er komen? O, wat is de pijn in mijn vingers gering bij de kwellig in mijn hart! dacht ze. Ik moet 't erop wagen! God zal mij niet in de steek laten! Angstig, alsof het een boze daad was, sloop ze in het heldere maanlicht naar beneden de tuin in. Ze liep door de lange lanen en de lege straten naar het kerkhof. Daar zag ze op een van de grootste grafstenen een groep afschuwelijke heksen in een kring zitten. Zij deden hun votten uit alsof zij in het bad wilden en toen groeven ze met hun lange, magere vingers in de verse graven. Ze haalden de lijken eruit en aten het vlees op. Elisa moest vlak langs hen heen; zij richtten hun boze ogen op haar, maar Elisa zei haar gebed, verzamelde de brandende netels en droeg ze naar het slot.

Eén had haar gezien, de aartsbisschop. Hij was nog op toen de anderen al sliepen; nu had hij toch gelijk gekregen. Met de koningin was het niet in de haak: zij was een heks en had de koning en het hele volk betoverd.

In de biechtstoel vertelde hij aan de koning wat hij had gezien en waar hij bang voor was. Toen die harde woorden over zijn lippen kwamen schudden de gesneden heiligenbeelden hun hoofd, alsof ze wilden zeggen: niet waar, Elisa is onschuldig! Maar de aartsbisschop legde het anders uit en vond dat het tegen haar pleitte dat de beelden hun hoofd over haar schudden. Toen rolden twee grote tranen over de wangen van de koning, hij ging naar huis met twijfel in zijn hart; en hij deed alsof hij 's nachts sliep, maar hij vond geen rust. Hij merkte dat Elisa opstond en dat herhaalde zij iedere nacht, iedere keer ging hij haar zachtjes achterna en zag haar in haar verborgen kamertje verdwijnen. Elke dag werd zijn gelaat somberder: Elisa zag het wel, maar ze begreep de oorzaak niet en het maakte haar bang; en wat treurde zij om haar broers! Op het koninklijk fluweel en purper vloeiden haar zilte tranen. Die lagen daar als schitterende diamanten, en allen die deze pracht zagen, wensten koningin te zijn.

Intussen was zij spoedig met haar arbeid gereed. Er ontbrak nog maar één hemd; maar zij had helemaal geen vlas meer en geen enkele brandnetel. Nog één keer, maar nu ook voor het laatst, moest ze naar het kerkhof en enkele handen vol plukken. Ze dacht met angst aan de eenzame wandeling en aan de verschrikkelijke heksen; maar haar wil was zo sterk als haar vertrouwen op God. Elisa ging op weg en de koning en de aartsbisschop volgden haar. Bij het hek van het kerkhof zagen zij haar verdwijnen en toen ze naderbij kwamen zaten daar de heksen op de grafsteen, zó als Elisa hen had gezien, en de koning wendde zijn gelaat af, want te midden van die afschuwelijke wezens stelde hij zich haar voor, wier hoofd nog deze avond tegen zijn borst had gerust.

"Het volk moet over haar oordelen!" zei hij, en het volk oordeelde: zij zou verbrand worden in de rode vlammen.

Uit de statige koningszalen werd zij gevoerd in een donkere, vochtige grot, waar de wind door het getraliede venster gierde; in plaats van fluweel en zijde gaf men haar de bos netels die zij verzameld had, daar kon ze haar hoofd op leggen; de harde, brandende hemden die ze had geweven, moesten haar dek en haar bed zijn, maar men kon haar niets geven dat haar liever was, zij vatte haar werk weer op en bad tot haar God. Buiten zongen de straatjongens spotversjes op haar; geen sterveling troostte haar.

Tegen de avond suisde langs het tralievenster een zwanenvleugel: het was de jongste broer, hij had zijn zuster gevonden; en zij snikte luid van blijdschap, hoewel ze wist dat de komende nacht waarschijnlijk de laatste zou zijn die ze beleefde. Maar nu was het werk dan ook bijna klaar en haar broers waren daar.

De aartsbisschop kwam om het laatste uur bij haar te zijn, dat had hij de koning beloofd. Maar zij schudde het hoofd, smeekte met blik en gebaren dat hij toch heen zou gaan; zij moest immers in deze nacht haar werk afmaken, anders zou alles voor niets geweest zijn, alles, smart, tranen en de slapeloze nachten. De aartsbisschop ging weg met boze woorden, maar de arme Elisa wist dat ze onschuldig was en bleef aan haar werk.

Muisjes liepen over de grond, sleepten netels voor haar voeten om toch maar een beetje mee te helpen, en de merel ging in het tralievenster zitten en zong de hele nacht zo vrolijk als hij kon, opdat zij de moed niet zou verliezen.

Het begon te schemeren — pas over een uur zou de zon opkomen — toen stonden daar de elf broers aan de poort van het slot en verlangden voor de koning geleid te worden, maar dat kon niet werd er geantwoord, het was nog nacht, de koning sliep en mocht niet worden gewekt. Zij smeekten en dreigden, de wacht kwam, ja zelfs de koning trad naar buiten en vroeg wat dat betekende; op hetzelfde ogenblik ging de zon op: er stonden geen broers meer, maar over het slot vlogen elf witte zwanen.

Het hele volk stroomde naar buiten de stadspoorten uit, ze wilden zien hoe de heks werd verbrand. Een armzalig paard trok de kar waarop ze zat; men had haar een kiel aangetrokken van grof zakkengoed. Haar prachtige, lange haar hing los om haar schoon hoofd, haar wangen waren doodsbleek, haar lippen bewogen zich zacht, terwijl haar vingers het groene vlas vlochten: zelfs op haar weg naar de brandstapel liet ze het eenmaal begonnen werk niet los; de tien hemden lagen aan haar voeten, aan het elfde werkte ze nog terwijl het volk haar hoonde.

"Kijk eens naar de heks, wat ze mompelt, ze heeft niet eens een gezangboek in haar hand, ze is met haar vervloekte toverkunsten bezig, scheur het in duizend stukken!"

En zij drongen op haar in en wilden het hemd uit elkaar rukken; maar daar kwamen elf witte zwanen aanvliegen, ze gingen om haar heen op de kar zitten en sloegen met hun grote vleugels. Toen ging het volk verschrikt opzij.

"Dat is een teken uit de hemel! Zij is vast onschuldig!" fluisterde de menigte, maar waagde het niet dit hardop te zeggen.

Nu greep de beul haar bij de hand, zij wierp inderhaast de elf hemden over de zwanen en daar stonden

elf schone prinsen; maar de jongste had een zwanenvleugel in plaats van een arm, want er ontbrak een mouw aan zijn hemd, dat had zij niet klaar gekregen.

"Nu mag ik spreken!" zei ze, "ik ben onschuldig!" En het volk dat zag wat er geschied was, boog zich voor haar neer als voor een heilige, maar zij zonk bewusteloos in de armen van haar broers, zó hadden spanning, angst en pijn haar aangegrepen. "Ja, zij is onschuldig!" zei de oudste broer en hij vertelde alles wat er gebeurd was. En terwijl hij vertelde verbreidde zich een geur als van miljoenen rozen, want elk stuk brandhout in de brandstapel had wortel geschoten en takken gekregen; daar stond opeens een machtige, hoge geurende haag met rode rozen; bovenaan zat een bloem, wit en stralend als een ster; die plukte de koning en legde haar op Elisa's borst: toen ontwaakte zij met vrede en geluk in haar hart. Alle kerkklokken begonnen uit zichzelf te luiden en de vogels kwamen in grote troepen aanvliegen; en er ging een bruiloftsstoet naar het slot terug, als nog geen koning ooit had gezien.