

## THE WOODCOCKS

### Mykola Khvylovy

Hanna and Dmytriy arrived in this once quiet small town, which was located some six hundred kilometres from Non-Paris (someone had once so ironically dubbed our capital city), in the middle of June—a time when our steppe South no longer exuded the scent of grapes, let alone apricots. Comrade Vovchyk arrived much later, on that very July day when the thunderstorm passed over the river and brought down cold rains. He arrived impulsive and inattentive as usual and without a second thought dropped in along the way to the “bar of the best violet wine of I. L. Karasyk.” In his letter (long since lost) Dmytriy had happened to mention this somewhat familiar-sounding surname.

“Well then, my dear gentleman,” he said, politely removing his Panama hat, “I need the address of my friends.”

“And who are your friends?” I. L. Karasyk inquired. Comrade Vovchyk never expected such a reply and his eyebrows rose in astonishment.

“Do you not know Monsieur Karamazov and Madame Karamazova?”

I. L. Karasyk squirmed about and pulled a guilty face. It could be said that he had read *The Brothers Karamazov*, but it had never occurred to him that these brothers (or at least one of them) could have ventured into these remote parts. Therefore he considered it necessary to cover up for his ignorance as quickly as possible and, after offering his unexpected and peculiar guest a dirty chair, he suggested a bottle of violet wine of his own making.

“Thank you very much!” said Comrade Vovchyk, taking fifteen copecks from his pocket. “But you’ve misunderstood me. . . The thing is that. . .”

Next he made clear the matter in question and the puzzle was finally solved. And it immediately became clear what I. L. Karasyk had to do with Dmytriy and Hanna (literally nothing!) and how much he knew about them (positively not a thing!). Then Comrade Vovchyk asked to be forgiven for the trouble he had caused and went on his way. He continued on his way, and an hour or so later located his friends. Eventually he forgot to inform them about “the bar of the best violet wine” and the ridiculous misunderstanding, yet he immediately recounted the interesting incident that had taken place that day on the river steamer: his acquaintance with some fairly piquant young ladies. He was waving his arms about so energetically that Hanna could surmise only one thing: the conversation

concerned "those women."

"One is called. . . I can't remember right now," Comrade Vovchyk was saying, "and the other is Auntie Klava. They were accompanied by their stern father, who was wearing a gold pince-nez. Come to think of it, perhaps he wasn't their father, I didn't inquire."

"So, you claim these ladies live near us?" Hanna said, dropping her sewing.

"That's exactly what I want to say, Hannusia! I also want to add that I liked Auntie Klava a terrible lot and in another two months or so (they're here for two months also) I will probably eventually fall in love with her."

Comrade Vovchyk roared with laughter, quite inappropriately raised a white eyebrow at Hanna and, singing an aria from *Prince Igor*, went off to wash.

"What a reedy voice!" Karamazov said, covering his ears. "He will never agree with me that he should give up singing."

Hanna looked askance at Dmytri.

"It seems to me that I am not mistaken in calling your new acquaintances brazen little hussies," she said. "Do you suppose perhaps it was they who engaged Comrade Vovchyk?"

Hanna had been deliberately cutting: she was provoking her husband to be frank.

"Sure it was them," Karamazov said calmly and laconically. "You guessed right."

As should have been expected, the reply did not satisfy the woman and she raised her eyebrows. How could Hanna not but frown? She was overjoyed that Dmytri had at last resolved to leave behind the putrid Lopan<sup>1</sup> and had become much calmer. But one could not act this way either: one could not wander about at night for two weeks with some chance townswomen and openly demonstrate one's absurd conspiracy the whole time. And really: why did he not wish to talk with her about the subject broached by Vovchyk just now? Hanna knew that this was another frivolous infatuation; however, this time she feared for her husband's reputation for some reason. These female summer residents seemed somewhat suspect to her, and again she recalled every detail of the small encounter which had taken place on that very river steamer.

As she remembered it, Dmytri had incautiously brushed his elbow against one of them, the younger one apparently, the one with those extraordinary almond eyes. She had turned around and called him a bear. Dimi smiled and said that he quite agreed with such a definition, but unfortunately he was not at all offended by it. She asked why. He uttered some paradox and began to assure her that there was nothing bad about that, because. . . all his nation was a little clumsy. "But can that be an excuse?" she asked. Then Dmytri stood his ground and somehow very romantically recommended his country. He spoke with terrible enthusiasm

and the almond-eyed woman suddenly squeezed his arm and said that he was the first man she had met with such clarity of thought. Unfortunately, there really was no such clarity; Dmytriy liked the compliment, however; of this Hanna was now quite convinced.

"Well, all right," she sighed, "I'm satisfied with your reply."

Karamazov threw his wife a frigid glance and clenched his teeth. He was sick and tired of this whimpering and resolved to put an end to it.

"What do you want from me?" he asked. "Do you want me to shoot my brains out?"

Hanna finally understood her husband and changed the topic of conversation. She even calmed down, obviously not guessing then that these chance ladies would play quite a role in her life.

Comrade Vovchyk stopped in the same house as Dmytriy. He was given a separate room, the windows of which faced the apricot orchard, and he was very pleased; any greater isolation from his pal would have ruined his summer holiday. Apart from Vovchyk, the Karamazovs also had a servant, Odarka, living in the apartment with them; Hanna had engaged her for two months. The servant prepared lunch and went off to the market after produce. For some reason she reminded Dmytriy of the celebrated cook from the no less celebrated *Laughter*,<sup>2</sup> and when she glanced at him silently it always made him feel somewhat awkward. Odarka gave her master and mistress such weird looks, as if they were indeed harboring something bad. She was terribly taciturn and the Karamazovs only heard her utter the terse: "At your service."

In short, on a certain day of a certain month a new and completely organized family joined the plebeian circle of the small remote town.

However the South did not welcome it very enthusiastically. A hot wind blew in from the sea and the provincial streets were literally scorched. In the evening the air rang with mosquitoes and burned the face so much, that there was not the slightest chance of leaving one's room.

The affair began on one such evening. The burnt sun had long since burrowed into the distant sands, but the windows and shutters were still securely closed. Hanna sat in the twilight of the room (as happens in novels) and greedily drank some cold water in small mouthfuls. Dmytriy and Comrade Vovchyk were lying on the sofas.

"This is quite impossible," said Hanna. "This is torture, not relaxation."

"Quite right, my Annette," Comrade Vovchyk agreed. "I'm literally thinking the same thing."

Hanna said nothing. Then lanky Vovchyk spread out his lank arms, eyed his retriever, who lay breathing heavily beside his sofa, and said that as soon as the hunting-season was opened he would spit on this small town and crawl off into the reeds for a whole month.

"And what must I do?"

"I suggest you take my fishing rods and do some fishing. Or we could think of something else."

The conversation continued in this vein and was just as boring as the heat. This chatter had to stop and Hanna became silent. Comrade Vovchyk grew quiet too.

However Dmytriyy was silent not because he was bored, but because he was looking intently at Hanna just then.

Today his wife did not seem so much colorless, as helpless. Helpless for the very reason that she could not (of this he was already convinced) stand in his way. Was Hanna capable of rising to those questions which so troubled him? Could she ever overcome her narrow-mindedness? Hanna was, after all, a typical Myrhorod<sup>3</sup> petty-bourgeois, and it was she who stopped him from becoming a wholehearted and resolute person, it was she who prevented him from offsetting himself against the slave mentality of his degenerate compatriots. Did not these astonished cherry-colored (definitely cherry-colored) eyes utterly typify her. Was she not the typical Ukrainian woman who after having so disgracefully seen off Taras Bulba's sons to the Zaporozhian Sich, went off to beget more weak-willed people?

"I have it!" Dmytriyy thought, and hereupon painfully bit into his lip; it suddenly occurred to him to do away with Hanna.

However, he had bitten his lip not because something tragic was drawing near, but because he remembered that such a tragedy had in essence already taken place. Was it not Hanna whom he had once executed during the Civil War outside some provincial monastery?

"Know what, Hannusia," Karamazov suddenly remarked. "I've just been thinking about you and it occurred to me that you've been resurrected. How does one understand that?"

"You're being terribly vague, Dimi," Hanna said. "What's the matter?"

Karamazov was silent. Then Comrade Vovchyk turned onto his right side and said limply:

"A 'finished philosopher', as the Galicians say."

"Kindly desist from your pronouncements, Vovchyk," Hanna almost shrieked, and turned to her husband once more.

"Why are you so silent, Dimi?"

But Karamazov did not reply this time either. He turned to the basket of apricots and regarded it thoughtfully. He was recalling his university years and his tempestuous, dishevelled head with its Southern romantic eyes. Reminiscences always disturbed people and against their backdrop reality became more vivid. He remembered that he had wanted to graduate from the medical faculty. But how long ago that had been! A few words remained, and nothing more: *febris catarrhalis*, which was, he remembered, catarrh fever, and *febris gastrica*—intestinal disorder. Then there was *spiritus amoniaci causticus pro pauperos* and... that was about it.

"But anyway, why am I avoiding the main issue?" Dmytriy thought, and had obviously thought out loud, for Comrade Vovchyk turned around and said that his pal reminded him of an old granny who continually muttered under her breath.

Hanna gave her husband a careful look. Just now he had deeply frightened her. It occurred to her that the winter episode was being repeated. True, she no longer observed those former scenes, Dmytriy no longer banged his head against the partition (which he had done often enough in winter), he no longer mentioned the lavatory bowl filled with excrement into which the Revolution had supposedly slipped, moreover—his eyes rarely burned with excitement, and he appeared lively and cheerful. But such a change of finery did not always seem quite natural to Hanna. . . . And then this abstract talk about nationhood. Of course she was not at all averse to her country taking a broad path. But why go into hysterics over it? And finally, this was not a very sensible passion; for one thing, it could make him a backward person, and secondly—this was plainly a betrayal of social ideals.

"Dimi!" Hanna exclaimed. "I beg you to be more lucid. What did you wish to tell me?"

Karamazov made a wry face (as if to ask why she was pestering him) and suddenly became unnerved:

"Go to the damned devils!" he exclaimed and rapped a chair against the floor.

Then Comrade Vovchyk, who knew Dmytriy no worse than Hanna and realized that a family drama might erupt now, hurried to the rescue and began to placate his friend.

"All right, then! What are you shouting for. . . . You are, after all, a civilized person, Dmytriy."

Vovchyk said no more, but even this sufficed. Vovchyk had a wonderful effect on people's nerves, probably because he was somewhat not of this world: he never had any tragedies and viewed life so simply and lucidly. For example, he was a wonderful linguist and being a research assistant, he was already being offered a professorial chair but the billiard cue somehow got in his way (he was quite a remarkable player). And, if the truth be known, then soccer interested him much more than all this linguistics, which he knew so thoroughly. "I'm going to the garden!" Hanna said and left the room.

## II

Comrade Vovchyk got up, bit into a green apricot and retorted unhappily, with the apricot in his mouth:

"You know, my friend, I wouldn't say that you're treating your wife in

'a very friendly manner."

"You think so?" Karamazov drawled in obvious mockery.

"What do you mean, 'think so'?" Vovchyk exploded. "It's a fact. Yes, it's a fact, honorable sir...! And you can't deny that."

One expected the linguist to emphasize his displeasure at this point with a French or English phrase: it was always like that with him when he flew into a rage. This time Karamazov beat him to it.

"Donnez-moi votre pouls?" he said, ironically stretching out his hand.

"I beg you not to joke!" Comrade Vovchyk almost screamed. I demand that you act seriously towards me. Tell me: do you love Hanna?"

"Now look here! What business is that of yours? Or maybe you have intentions towards her? If so, then let it be known to you: I detest her."

"You detest her? Then why are you living with her? And anyway... what right do you have to deceive her?"

Dmytriyy took the cigarettes on the table and lit a match. His face suddenly went pale and his eyes opened wide.

"So what do you think this right is?"

"Quit joking, please!" screeched Comrade Vovchyk. "I'm speaking seriously with you!"

"And I'm deadly earnest too!" Karamazov paused, rose from the sofa, and said in a strained voice: "However, I see that you still don't understand what I detest her for. So get this into your head: I detest her for being quiet and gentle, for having affectionate eyes, for being weak-willed and, finally, because she is incapable of killing a person. Do you understand now?"

"Why would she need to kill a person?"

"That is a very complicated story, Vovchyk," Dmytriyy smiled morbidly, "and I fear you won't understand it. Of course, you are a learned person, but as far as I know such questions weren't broached in the philological department."

"What do you mean by that?" the linguist replied in an offended tone.

"Exactly nothing...! And yet, here's what I want to say: it is very hard to kill a person, Vovchyk...! You've never killed yet... not in war, but in everyday life? There you go! But I have, and I know. It's a very complicated procedure. And it is complicated simply because you perform the whole thing consciously, knowing in advance that there is no way you can avoid killing the person."

"You're speaking nonsense, Dmytriyy!"

"No, Vovchyk, I'm speaking my mind. And I'm telling you a long-known truth: only through murder can one achieve complete social cleansing... Do you understand what I'm getting at? In the dynamics of progress social ethics can only be viewed as a permanent 'crime.' I place crime in inverted commas, because I've never regarded premeditated killing in the name of social ideals as a crime."

Comrade Vovchyk regarded his friend with even greater astonishment.

"Since when have you begun to think this way?" he asked.

"From that very moment when I joyously regarded the future, when the desire for victory spoke out forcefully within me once more, when I began madly to detest my narrow-minded contemporaries."

"You speak exactly like a prophet," Comrade Vovchyk retorted ironically.

Karamazov gave the linguist a cold stare and said: "And you thought that I really was just an ordinary person? Ah, how naive you are, my friend! Therefore, hasten to correct your mistake, for Dmytri Karamazov is forsooth a prophet, and only through him will you find sense in this earthly existence."

Dmytri suddenly stopped. Within a few minutes he turned yellow. His mouth became twisted and his lower lip was trembling.

"But all the same, Dmytri Karamazov is a great phrase-monger," the linguist said, "and he's sung himself a good panegyric."

"What's to be done," Karamazov smiled wryly. "In this world panegyrics have never been composed for those who haven't already sung them themselves. . . one way or another. I'm lauding myself cynically, but that's not the point. The end always justifies the means. My cynicism forces you and others to take notice of me, and that's just what I need. The fact that I'm a phrase-monger, you observed that correctly too," he agreed unexpectedly. "Of course all this is probably only empty talk and tomorrow I may be ashamed of it myself."

"Hm, such marvels!" Comrade Vovchyk said, and suddenly began to pace about the room. "Do you really have the inclination to philosophize, Dmytri? This is all so inane, you simply can't imagine."

"What exactly is inane?"

"Well this. . . in general, any philosophy. . . ! And yet, I think you're philosophizing with some purpose in mind. . . ."

The linguist made a sweeping gesture with his lank arms, smacked his lips and raised his white eyebrows in a look of victory, as if he really had to some degree deposed his mentor Potebnia.<sup>4</sup>

"I'm listening!" Karamazov said.

"Well, then. Have you ever shown any interest in the question: who, as a rule, loves to delve into philosophy?"

"I have."

It was obvious that Vovchyk did not like the answer, for he heatedly began assuring his comrade that he had never taken any interest in this; otherwise he wouldn't have had such scenes with Hanna.

"Well, all right," Vovchyk eventually remarked. "Who then, according to you?"

"Savages, obviously!" Karamazov replied calmly. And because he replied in a calm voice, and since Vovchyk never expected such an apt (in his opinion) reply, the linguist had no alternative but to become

disconcerted, just like any grown child.

"Well, and so what?" he asked in a helpless tone.

"I will probably be an exception to this rule."

Comrade Vovchyk approached the window and suddenly said in a low voice:

"You know, Dmytriy... you're no fool."

"Thanks."

"Really," the linguist jumped up, suddenly becoming animated. "I'm being quite serious. People have been philosophizing for thousands of years and they still haven't reached such a paradox."

"Which one exactly...? That there can be exceptions to the rule?"

"Forget your witticisms! But really: doesn't the blossoming of philosophical disciplines characterize a society as being underdeveloped?"

"Quite right," said Karamazov. "That's exactly why I consider myself a true son of my nation."

The linguist eyed his friend intently, tried to make sense of his rejoinder, but only waved his hand, unable to do so.

"Philosophy again!" he said, displeased, and slapped his retriever's back.

The conversation reached a stalemate and the friends discontinued it. They were speaking in different languages, and so it was quite pointless to continue the discussion. It had even been pointless to begin it, for a keen observer could have predicted beforehand that they would never come to an agreement about anything. Karamazov knew this too and it even gave him pleasure, for a deeper discussion would have estranged Vovchyk too—the tenth, or was it twentieth, of his short-lived friends. He had become such firm friends with the linguist only thanks to the latter's childish ability to accept the world at face value.

They had become acquainted three years earlier at a city stand and since then they had gone hunting somewhere each summer. They took their month-long vacation in August and only rarely, as happened this year, did they have the opportunity to spend time on the Dnieper in July as well.

"Who are you looking for out there?" the linguist asked when Karamazov walked up to the window.

"How can I put it?" Karamazov suddenly forced a smile. "It seemed to me that Aglaia had walked past somewhere nearby."

Comrade Vovchyk raised his white eyebrows.

"Which Aglaia is this?" he asked. "You don't intend to play the madman, do you?"

"At the moment it's hard to say, my dear Vovchyk... That's the name of one of the ladies whom you met on the steamer."

"So, you're already acquainted with them? Well, and...?"

"Well listen, then. Right now Auntie Klava's husband takes a nap and the ladies go for a walk to the market, passing right by our house."



"This familiarity is positively commendable, the linguist said delightedly. "My word, you wouldn't make such a bad rake . . . And this, by the way, is far better than your philosophy."

Karamazov approached the window. The heat suddenly began to subside as a fresh breeze blew in from the river. The scent of apricots in the air was somehow strange, so delicate, reminiscent for some reason of old Provence and old-fashioned cabriolets. Then reality too immediately became transformed into stylized delicate azure tones.

"Good!" Dmytriy said and sighed easily. "Only tell me one thing, Vovchyk: how would you view me if I were to leave Hanna and take up with one of these ladies... with Aglaia?"

"You've already managed to get so far?"

"In these two weeks or so I haven't been able to get anywhere. I'm asking you... just in case, so to speak."

Comrade Vovchyk began to roar with laughter so loudly and so unexpectedly that even his retriever jumped to its feet.

"You're a strange one!" he cried out. "Why do that when you can still, without leaving Hanna... well, how can I put it more delicately... Well, in short, use her... this girl. I think this girl too, unless she's an idiot, will agree to this."

"And what about Hanna? Will she agree too, in your opinion?"

The linguist hadn't noticed that Karamazov was not being serious, and replied:

"This I can't tell you. Who knows—a woman's soul is darkness, as they say... However, it would seem to me that she need not be told about it."

"Therefore you recommend that I deceive her?"

"If you like . . . ! In my opinion there's nothing frightening or offensive about it for her."

Karamazov came up to his interlocutor and grabbed him by the shoulder.

"Tut-tut," he retorted. "I wouldn't say that you know how to think logically, my learned friend. In our previous conversation you were indignant at me for wanting to deceive Hanna in some way, and now you yourself suggest that I be unfaithful to her."

Comrade Vovchyk was unable to say anything in reply because Hanna entered the room at that instant and announced that someone was asking for the linguist. Karamazov approached the basket of apricots, silently took an apricot and, having glanced at his wife, transferred his gaze to the burnt azure sky. He realized immediately who was asking after his pal. By the gate Comrade Vovchyk did in fact spy those holidaymakers who had so brazenly made his acquaintance on the river steamer. Actually, they weren't all present: the father, or whoever he was, was not there. Only Auntie Klava and Aglaia.

## III

"Good-day, Auntie Klava! Good-day, Aglaia!" Comrade Vovchyk bowed gallantly, as if he really were some celebrated rake.

"My best to you, mon ami," said Auntie Klava and, without a second thought, slipped her arm through his with a confident, resolute movement.

The woman whom the linguist had called Aglaia had no intentions at present of taking liberties with Vovchyk and only offered that he unpin and take one of the fragrant roses from her bosom. Comrade Vovchyk was delighted to oblige, and they slowly proceeded along the scorched empty street of the insignificant town.

"Have you come to stay for long?" asked Auntie Klava.

"Comrade Vovchyk has already told us," said Aglaia. "He is here for two months also."

"Yes," the linguist acknowledged. "You're not mistaken. But..."

He wanted to ask something, but fell silent without having voiced his question. In fact, he was not sure how to ask it: he was amazed at Auntie Klava—she was so intimate with him, as if she had known him since childhood.

"And what do you think," said Auntie Klava. "Why has Dmytriy become so nervous these last few years?"

"What... years?" Vovchyk had wanted to ask which Dmytriy, and how she had managed to become acquainted with Karamazov's most intimate details, where she had learnt about those 'years,' but his interlocutor's familiar tone left the linguist flabbergasted and he became utterly confused.

"You're not tongue-tied, are you?" Auntie Klava inquired. Aglaia roared with laughter. Comrade Vovchyk turned red and began to assure them that "nothing of the sort" had happened. He had simply not expected such sympathetic familiarity with matters of the Karamazov house.

"Then perhaps you know," said Auntie Klava, "how Dimi (she used this very word 'Dimi') intends to spend these two months. At Hanna's skirt, or with Aglaia?"

The question was already transcending all possible bounds, but this time Comrade Vovchyk was not bewildered. He decided that since Auntie Klava was so familiar with the Karamazov house, then she had obviously received the appropriate right for this from Dmytriy himself. He said that he would not answer the question and recommended that she ask his friend.

"That's long overdue!" Auntie Klava said, heaving a sigh of relief. "Can't you see, there are two of us and one of you... Only watch out you don't bring Hanna here as well."

"You want me to... to get Dmytriy right away?" the slow-witted linguist asked.

"Oh, my God," Aglaia said. "*C'est un grand malheur de n'avoir pas été*

bien élevé."

"Indeed! It is a great misfortune not to be well-bred," Auntie Klava agreed.

Then Comrade Vovchyk made off towards the gate with all haste, leaving the ladies on their own under the provincial acacias.

"Here's what," said Auntie Klava. "I'm taking Vovchyk for myself, and now Dmytriy will remain forever yours."

"I'm not arguing," retorted Aglaia and her beautiful teeth bit through an acacia leaf.

It was almost completely dark. Stars began to appear. A warm breeze came off the nearby sea. Aglaia was tracing hieroglyphs in the sand with her pale-blue parasol, Auntie Klava peered into her reticule, in fact into the mirror in her reticule, and powdered herself with a miniature sponge.

"Allow me to guess how old you are?" Auntie Klava smiled to herself.

"Obviously no more than twenty-seven," Aglaia said.

"You guessed, I'm twenty-seven. And how piquant that I'm already an auntie and that I've such a grown niece... You're twenty-three, aren't you?"

"You guessed right too!"

Auntie Klava corrected her eyebrow with a special pencil and whistled an aria from *The Bayadere*. Then the ladies continued to exchange light conversation and glanced from time to time in the direction in which Vovchyk had gone.

They were dressed in pink muslin dresses drawn in at the waist with belts and held pale-blue parasols. Auntie Klava looked far more carefree, her clear gray gaze did not have that barely perceptible twinkle of obstinacy and resolve which occasionally flashed in Aglaia's almond eyes, but Auntie Klava was a little more solid in stature.

Aglaia pulled out a small cigarette from her reticule, lit it and asked:

"Did you tell Zhenia (she was referring to Auntie Klava's husband) that we wouldn't be back before one?"

"Of course... I really don't hide anything from him."

"And he still isn't jealous?" Aglaia smiled.

"I still... don't know. The devil alone understands those men: there's one thing on their face, and maybe something else in their heart."

Auntie Klava inscribed a disc with a movement of her parasol, her eye caught the silver-blue tail of a meteor, and she said:

"Aga, don't think that Zhenia isn't at all capable of suffering spiritual dramas. In our time, they say even cows know how to sigh."

"You aren't mistaken, Auntie Klava. My Dmytriy confirms this at every step. It's a great pity you don't hear our conversations."

Aglaia had said "my Dmytriy" so confidently and peremptorily that it made even Auntie Klava smile.

"You're a decisive person, Aga," she noted. "You haven't even gotten to know him properly, and already you speak of him as if he were your own

husband... What about Hanna? Did you find out much about her?"

"You're being extremely naive, Auntie Klava... In our time people not only come together in two weeks, they can also separate. But enough!" and Aglaia waved her parasol in the direction where they could already make out Karamazov's figure.

Vovchyk had dashed out into the street a minute or so later and caught up to his pal. At first the ladies saw only Dmytriy. He was walking towards them with his nervous step and his figure kept appearing, then disappearing behind the trunk of the young maple growing by the road. Then an accordion struck up somewhere and stars poured out onto the short boulevards of this small insignificant town. The republic's youth was roaring with laughter somewhere. Then accordions started up on other blocks too.

Comrade Vovchyk had already caught up to Dmytriy and they made their way towards the jolly (at least that's what the linguist immediately determined) and amiable ladies.

"Well...", the linguist said, stopping, and spread out his arms.

Auntie Klava had long ago characterized Vovchyk as a somewhat clumsy person, and so without much ado she slipped her arm through his. She said there was no need to introduce Karamazov, for they had had the pleasure of strolling with him on many evenings past... and then, she would be greatly pleased if Vovchyk were to become just as interesting company for her as Dmytriy had become for her niece. In a few minutes the procession (these were Aglaia's words) was proceeding in the following order: in front were Auntie Klava and Vovchyk, behind them came Aglaia and Dmytriy. The distance between the first and second couple was about a step and a half. Auntie Klava rested her pale-blue parasol against Vovchyk's neck and questioned him about who and what he was. In other words, she demanded that the linguist tell her about his past, present and future in detail. Aglaia did not require such information from her partner: they had talked about that two weeks earlier. She unpinned the remaining rose from her bosom and held it against Dmytriy's face. She asked him what the rose smelled like, whether he liked the smell, whether mignonette didn't smell better. After they had cut across the provincial market and entered the circle of lights under the awning, Aglaia assured Dmytriy that there was an air of Flaubert about the place and even Old French life... Karamazov certainly knew the French poet Villon...? And then he couldn't but love Gogol's phantasmagoria. Aglaia was positive that it was possible to stylize our modern times brilliantly.

Dmytriy said something inept. Then Aglaia covered his mouth with her fragrant palm and said:

"What a strange one you are, Dimi! A real provincial!"

"Already on such familiar terms with Dmytriy?" Auntie Klava remarked, turning around.<sup>5</sup> "You'd make a perfect cavalier, Aga."

Auntie Klava guffawed so sonorously that one provincial couple (a former official head clerk, it seemed, and the ageing daughter of a local cavalier of the red banner) that was coming towards them hastily dashed to one side and gave way to the gay company.

Next, Comrade Vovchyk began to laugh. He was guffawing so insanely that he had to let go of his lady's arm, sit down on the ground and stop the company's progress. When they began questioning him what the matter was, he could only force out the word "provincial."

"Well . . . all right! Well . . . provincial. . . ! But what's the joke?"

Then, finally, Comrade Vovchyk said that for Karamazov this was the most insulting word, and that he couldn't even imagine the indignation it had provoked in the bosom of his sarcastic friend.

"There's nothing funny at all!" Aglaia retorted sharply and took Dmytri by the arm.

Auntie Klava also discovered that there was nothing funny here and even found it necessary (obviously in her capacity as Auntie) to give the linguist a short lecture. As should have been expected, Vovchyk was terribly bewildered by such an-unexpected finale and he even wanted to ask forgiveness for his tactlessness. But with an unceremonious gesture, Auntie Klava adjusted his tie, pressed close to him and increased the distance to three steps.

"Perhaps you really have taken offense, Dimi?" Aglaia asked.

"Nothing of the kind!" Karamazov smiled. "I just didn't understand . . . *you*."

He said "you" with a special satisfaction—to this chimerical girl who had so quickly become intimate with him and who had somehow immediately taken possession of him (if the truth were known, he had not been joking, but had been deadly earnest when he had told Vovchyk that he wanted to get together with Aglaia)—and her outward features had definitely conquered him. Those almond eyes were much too intelligent and passionate, and her youthful breasts swayed much too enticingly for him to accept her as an ordinary woman. Today an unclear presentiment and a sweet ache had emerged in him, and today he would have liked to accompany her all night long.

"What didn't you understand?" Aglaia asked. "Why I called you a provincial?"

"Yes!"

"That's clear, my sweet. Back there on the steamer (remember our argument?), back there I thought that you were a provincial. That's obvious from everything: your movements, and actions towards a modern woman . . . like me, for instance . . . Why did you utter "you" so strangely? Perhaps you wanted to say be less familiar? Well? And then even formally, you're a provincial . . . Don't you live in the provinces?"

"As you are aware, I live in a capital city!" Karamazov smiled.

"Where's this?" Aglaia guffawed. "Not the one on the Lopan?"

This girl (who was obviously from some Myrhorod) spoke so nastily about the Lopan capital that Vovchyk, having overheard this conversation, stopped and asked:

"Permit me to ask, where do you reside? Not in Uman?"

"You're seriously interested? Very well, then: my capital city and my country—may I inform you—are very far from here."

"France? Italy? Spain?"

"Muscovy, my darling," Aglaia said and pressed close to her companion.

Muscovy? Well really, Aglaia must be lying! Dmytriy supported her? Then he didn't believe him either. Really! What kind of Muscovites were they? No, this was nonsense! Let Auntie Klava confirm this and only then would he be able to believe it. In short, if Aglaia really was serious—Vovchyk would become totally confused.

At last Auntie Klava spoke up, but she said the same thing. They were indeed Muscovites, and even native residents, for they had lived in Moscow since early childhood. Such and such a street, such and such a number, streetcar nine. If he needed to know the telephone number she could reveal that too. Auntie Klava's husband (you know him—the fellow with the gold pince-nez) works for the trade union. Aglaia was an orphan (remember that moving film about the times of the French Revolution?), and she lived with Auntie Klava. She was in her final year at the Moscow Conservatory.

"But how come you know our language so well?" the linguist asked in amazement.

Ah, my God! What was so strange about that? This was by far not the first time they had come to rest in the beautiful steppes of Ukraine, so why shouldn't they know such a musical (Auntie Klava said exactly that—"musical") language. Aglaia, for instance, loved Ukraine very much and, be it known, even eccentrically. Anyway, Auntie Klava refused to say any more, Aglaia could fill him in on the details, and Dmytriy too, perhaps. It was actually under the influence of her niece that she had become such a curious Muscovite.

"Beautiful!" Comrade Vovchyk wrung his hands with a crackle of joints, and finally addressed Karamazov in all seriousness: "You know, Dmytriy, their portraits must definitely be printed in one of our magazines."

"As unique examples?"

"Quit joking," the linguist waived his hand. "For the Ruthenian public, for . . . how can I put it . . . for 'pooshchrenie,' as the Russians say."

"For encouragement," Aglaia corrected him. "That would be much closer to your language."

"Now there's a Muscovite for you!" said Karamazov. "Don't you feel a little embarrassed, mister linguist?"

Comrade Vovchyk blushed crimson. He wanted to prove something,

for some unknown reason (and quite ineptly) mentioned Provence, Provençal literature, mentioned the nineteenth century, Jacques Jasmin,<sup>6</sup> Theodore Aubanel<sup>7</sup> and so on, but Auntie Klava had again dragged him a distance of three paces away. Thus the conversation was interrupted. For the linguist there was still much unsaid here, even intriguing (weren't there enough Muscovite holidaymakers travelling through Ukraine?), however he expected to be able to discuss this with Karamazov and find out in detail the history of the Moscow ladies' acquaintance with the Southern culture.

"So, you're finishing a new epic, then?" Aglaia asked, once they were on their own again.

Karamazov stopped and pulled a displeased face. "I think I've told you many a time, that I work for an economics organ. At present I'm working on the question of the lowering of prices."

"You mean to say one can't make an epic out of the question of price-cutting?"

"I mean to say that I have nothing in common with the Taras Shevchenkos."

"If that is all, then I'm glad," Aglaia said, becoming thoughtful. "These are the very people your nation lacks. It appears to me that you didn't want to put it that way. Do you follow me? I feel that without great enthusiasm there can be no real economists."

"Quite right!" Karamazov agreed. "A stake is obviously driven out with a stake, and a *Kobzar*-ized<sup>8</sup> psyche can only be educated with a Hiawathized *Capital*, so to speak."

"You've hit the bull right in the eye!" Aglaia said enthusiastically. "Without a Longfellow you really won't be able to produce your own economists and politicians. Only I think that you're introducing Marx here quite needlessly."

"That's a matter of conviction," Dmytri said, displeased.

"I don't think so. Because Marx is quite an incongruous element in your country. You're aware that when you add hydrogen to oxygen, no sooner does a hot body touch this mixture—there is an explosion and . . . water is formed. Anyway, let's not argue. I'm curious about another question. Speaking of Taras Shevchenko, did you mean rhymesters in general or him in particular, that small god of your nation?"

"I meant both rhymesters in general and him in particular."

"Why do you detest Shevchenko so?"

"What do I detest him for?" Karamazov made a displeased face again, as if to say: why this grilling? Then he suddenly tossed his hair back nervously and stopped. "I detest him," he said in a malicious voice, becoming overly inflamed, "because it was Shevchenko who castrated our intelligentsia. Wasn't it he who fostered this dim-witted slave-enlightener, whose name is legion? Wasn't it Shevchenko—perhaps not such a bad poet but a weak-willed person amazingly lacking in culture—wasn't it he who taught us to write poems, sentimentalizing in 'Kateryna style,' rebelling in

'Haidamak'<sup>9</sup> style, to look absurdly and aimlessly at the world and its construction through a prism of backwardness sweetened with frightening phrases? Wasn't it he, this serf, who taught us to berate the lord behind his back, so to speak, and drink vodka with him and grovel before him when he slaps us familiarly on the shoulder and says: 'You, Matiusha, are a talent, after all.' It was just this image-painting 'Father Taras' who halted the cultural development of our nation and stopped it from forming a state-wide unity at the right time.

"The small fools think that if there had been no Shevchenko, there would have been no Ukraine, but my feeling is what damned good is it the way we've seen it up till now... because in its current form with its idiotic Ukrainianizations in social processes it is only performing the role of a brake."

"A wonderful definition!" Aglaia said delightedly and at the same time produced an ironic smile. "But..."

"But, perhaps it's time for us to change the subject," Dmitry retorted; first of all he didn't like Aglaia's praise (why this candy, when he was a grown adult?) and then he suddenly caught himself at cheap pathos.

Then Aglaia immediately interrupted the conversation and suggested that they catch up to Auntie Klava and the linguist who had ventured far ahead. She proposed that they race there and handed Karamazov her reticule and parasol. But then she changed her mind and told him to take her chamois glove from her reticule. She suggested that he place the glove against the lower part of his face and, after he had done this, asked him what it smelled of.

"What does it smell of...? Obviously, a woman's body."

"Wonderful...! And you like this smell?"

"How can I put it," said Karamazov, "perhaps I like it, but more certainly—no."

Aglaia did not believe him. She grabbed hold of his head and, making her already large eyes even larger, began to fondle her companion.

"Tales!" she said. "You're not telling the truth. I know that you like this smell. Because... you don't like... Hanna."

"Are you referring to my wife?"

"Yes. Why haven't you introduced me to her yet? Why are you silent?"

Why was he silent? Of course he would do this. He would finally introduce Aglaia to Hanna.

But he thought that she was a strange girl all the same, and then thought that his wife was right in calling her tactless. This was not nice, hastening into his intimate corners. Didn't Aglaia understand this...? And then where had she learned that he didn't like Hanna? In short, Karamazov was displeased once more, which was why he lit his match so nervously.

She understood him straight away and hastened to change the subject. At this moment they were approaching the edge of the cliff.



## IV

"Let's rest a little more," Aglaia suggested, lying down on the grass. "We could warn the others too."

She called out to her companion to follow her example and to sit down somewhere there with her partner. Auntie Klava and Vovchyk agreed and stopped at the same high cliff some twenty steps further on. Then Aglaia moved closer to the cliff edge and said:

"Does our new acquaintance share your views...? I'm referring to Comrade Vovchyk."

"Which views do you have in mind?" Karamazov asked.

"It's obvious which ones—those you acquainted me with on the steamer during our first meeting and then continue to touch on nearly every evening."

"You're referring to the idea of my nation's rebirth?"

"Yes. I'm referring to national romanticism."

Karamazov made a wry face as if to show that he had nothing in common with what she was referring to, something he had already told her several times, and so one had to be more careful with such terms.

"We are speaking in different languages," he said. "I'll repeat it once more: the idea of my nation's rebirth has nothing in common with national romanticism."

Aglaia smiled and rested the pale-blue parasol on her knees.

"Let it be your way," she said. "So what about Vovchyk then?"

"My friend not only doesn't share these views, he generally stands quite aloof from any politics."

"And you can still consider such a lump of meat your friend?"

"And why not? Can't he contain fine human beginnings?"

"Meat always remains meat," Aglaia said vigorously. "And there can be no human beginnings in meat."

She was looking very intently at her partner, as if she wanted to hypnotize him.

"That's fair enough," said Karamazov. "But I can't not be friends with Vovchyk."

"Such a pity!" Aglaia retorted and assumed a moralistic tone. "One should be consistent even in trivialities. Apparently it was Tolstoj who once said that it is hardest to love our fellow man. I think that it is much harder to despise him with true hatred. Only here can one demonstrate one's exceptional will and, if you like, courage... You seem to place these in high esteem?"

"You're implying that I lack will power and cannot be courageous?"

Dmytriy said this in a somewhat uncertain voice, as if he did not trust himself.

"You are willful and courageous!" Aglaia noted confidently and even with a certain enthusiasm. "It was exactly because of this that you caught

my fancy so quickly . . . As a person, of course."

The conversation broke off. She was already looking at the ground, hiding her eyes from him. He was silent because at this moment an inner struggle was brewing inside him: on the one hand, he was flattered by her enthusiasm for him as a courageous and willful person, on the other hand he didn't quite believe her (how did she know that he was just such a person? It wasn't from her several conversations with him?). And then suddenly he became somehow offended by her self-confidence and this fatherly tone. At last he calmed down and said:

"You know, you were quite correct there: I am referring to my fellow man. I like this assertion very much. I think it was my namesake—Aliosha Karamazov—who stressed love towards distant kin. And I consider that this emphasis must also be transposed to a hatred of one's fellow man."

"And you consider that the greatest riddle is hidden just here?"

"Here and nowhere else!" Karamazov said with a degree of emotion. "For the life of me I cannot despise them with true hatred. Every one of my fellow men—even my greatest enemies—has, on occasion, you know, a human smile and such a sweet and good face, as if the beautiful Mother of God were looking at you. I stress *every one*, because I see this smile and this face even in stern and evil-natured people."

"Maybe you're exaggerating? In every one?"

"I swear it! Mother of God at each and every step. This is a horror, and sometimes even one's hands fall to one's side in exhaustion. One can't meet people. In order to do anything and to struggle, you have to put on the mask of a misanthrope and hide your eyes behind it, first of all . . . You know, eyes are the fiercest enemy of any progress, for with your eyes you see the Mother of God and it is in them that the Mother of God lurks."

Karamazov stopped and began nervously to bite his lips. From an ordinary mentally normal person he was suddenly transformed into a maniac. Flinching from time to time, he kept turning his head towards the cliff and looked in bewilderment into the hazy distance of the Dnieper's waters.

"In short, the Mother of God stops you from detesting your fellow man?" Aglaia asked.

"Only She. In the name of some idea I am capable of anything, even killing someone. But any Ivan Ivanovych can win me over in a single moment with one human smile . . . even if I had detested this Ivan Ivanovych with my immature and somewhat droll hatred."

"And has it always been this way with you?"

"No," Karamazov said with a certain touch of sorrow in his voice. "The Mother of God has overwhelmed me so strongly only in the last few years. Before, it was much easier. Earlier the idea blinded me almost completely, and no fellow man existed for me."

Aglaia took Karamazov's hand and placed it on her palm. "Here's

what," she said. "There are two hatreds: real and your abortive one. The first is great hatred and it creates life. This hatred does not recognize fellow man. The second, abortive hatred is merely a shadow of the first. The first comes from the intellect and the heart, the second only from the intellect . . . What do you think, can one be a courageous and willful person *only from the intellect?*"

"You've already begun to have doubts about me?" Dmytri'y asked, forcing a smile.

"Nothing of the sort!" Aglaia noted confidently once more. "You have willpower and you are courageous. I only think that there is no Mother of God and that She is nothing more than a spectre. I also think that your abortive hatred is already a true hatred and you are capable of detesting your fellow man . . . You told me how once, during the civil war, you executed your fellow man outside some monastery . . ."

"But that was in the name of a great idea," Karamazov blurted out unexpectedly.

"And are you left without ideals now? Aren't you captivated by the idea of your nation's rebirth?"

"Of course it captivates me," he said in a diffident voice. "But . . ."

"Without any 'buts'," Aglaia cut him off abruptly. "One or the other—either this is an ideal or this is a new spectre. It must captivate you too, just like the one in whose name you executed your fellow man."

Karamazov suddenly roared with laughter. "That's true," he said. "Sometimes such inanity enters my head that later, by God, I feel ashamed of myself. For instance, it occasionally seems to me that the Mother of God corrects the so-called human in me. So that not only Ivan Ivanovych is a fellow man, but I myself as well. So that I must transpose the hatred onto myself. When Ivan Ivanovych subdues me, it means the moment has come when I must despise Dmytri'y Karamazov, that is, myself."

"The fact that you must despise yourself when Ivan Ivanovych subdues you—that's right. But as for the correction, that really is inanity and outright nonsense."

"And sometimes even," he continued, "it appears that hatred itself must bear the Mother of God in itself."

"That is even more absurd, since hatred and the Mother of God are two completely opposite poles."

"That's what I debate with myself. But I counter this blow with the fact that true hatred—as has long been known—is the greatest love. This means therefore that true hatred is a beautiful human smile."

"This is sophistry for the charlatan and the coward. The Mother of God cannot but stand on the path to true hatred and therefore to a valiant act."

"Quite right!" Karamazov agreed. "But it seems to me that the Mother of God cannot *stand* on the path and that Her mere absence makes hatred abortive."

"In what way?"

"Because the partner of true hatred is always the joyous and devout, uneven beat of the heart, as if one was welcoming Christ's magnificent resurrection."

Aglaia moved closer still to the edge of the cliff. "I reckon," she said, "that the matter here is much simpler. You're not worried by the Mother of God, only by ordinary diffidence. People execute to the joyous beat of their heart then, let's say, when there are no more doubts remaining."

"Who knows," Karamazov said in a cracked voice. "Perhaps I'm mistaken."

He suddenly felt a terrible longing overwhelming him. He no longer saw Aglaia before him, nor the Dnieper, nor the beautiful Southern night. He had already forgotten how highly he esteemed himself for his courage and will power, and now felt himself to be a terribly good-for-nothing person. He even wanted someone to spit in his face—to spit for a long time, importunately and offensively.

Aglaia was obviously watching her partner intently and she hastened to his assistance.

"You are definitely mistaken, my friend," she said. "You are deeply mistaken."

"Are you referring to the Mother of God?"

"I'm talking about you. You are mistaken, if you think that diffidence will trouble you for a long time. This is a short, temporary phenomenon and it will soon disappear."

She got up, then sat down on the grass again and forced him to sit beside her.

"That's right, my little boy! Those who wish to be willful people can't but overcome diffidence in themselves," she said and placed her hand on his head.

It was already a pitch-dark Southern night. Muffled sounds kept awakening on the Dnieper every minute. A steamer was roaring away somewhere and far to the south its inviting lights sailed along. Aerolites flashed and fell from time to time, disturbing the eyes with the mysterious light of their bright-silver trail.

"Yes," Dmytryi announced suddenly. "Those who want to be willful people can't but overcome diffidence in themselves. And you're right that I've already overcome it. I cannot but overcome it, for the future rests with my young nation and with my young class."

He took her hand and squeezed it tightly. The full-blooded person was awakening in him again and he was undergoing a metamorphosis once more. He didn't even notice Aglaia smile ironically when he linked the future of his nation with 'some kind of' class.

"At times I literally choke with happiness," he continued, tossing stones down off the cliff, completely oblivious to the fact that his

conversation lacked elementary consistency. "The dark sides of our existence then completely disappear from my eyes and I begin to grow and become a giant. Because really: there can't be a situation in society when a struggle is impossible. If this is so, then... how glorious it is, all the same, 'to live in this world, gentlemen'<sup>10</sup> ... You can't even imagine how fond I've become of this hackneyed word—progress. In essence progress is the anchor of salvation. It is the way out of the situation in which the revolution now finds itself."

"But you talk just like a first-grade pupil," Aglaia said.

"Quite right!" Dmytriy fervently seized on her words. "I am just that—a first-grade pupil—and I have the courage to admit it. Such is the logic of events: those who wish to live in our day and age must, without fail, begin with the alphabet..."

"And pull out old slogans from the archives?"

"Even that, if you like. Can't the revolutionary slogans of today become reactionary tomorrow? Don't we already have such examples? And the opposite applies: haven't the catchwords of 1917 today become phariseism and material for speculation? This doesn't mean that we've failed, it means that one has to be a dialectician. Today the masses can only be led along behind the banner on which 'progress' is clearly emblazoned."

"Only I doubt if they'll follow you, because the masses can't stand abstraction."

"I quite agree," said Karamazov. "But I remain aloof from the vulgar interpretation of the masses. The masses create the revolution through its intelligentsia, because any mass explosion becomes a revolution only after it begins to be led by Dantons, Lenins or Trotskys."

"You would make a not altogether bad progressive agitator," Aglaia retorted and demonstratively began whistling a chansonette.

"You do me credit with your declaration."

"Nullement," the girl uttered. "On ne voit pas tous les jours un malade comme vous êtes."

"You take me for a sick person?" Dmytriy was offended.

"God forbid, Aglaia said. "I just find it unpleasant that your conversation lacks logic. On the one hand you voice indisputably sensible thoughts, but on the other hand you get mixed up with Lenins, classes and so on."

"Well now, the same old story," Karamazov said, displeased. "Perhaps you intend to influence my ideology? If so, you're wasting your energy in vain. Consider even the rebirth of my nation. I cannot think of it in any other way than as a means, rather than a goal or a factor, which helps me solve the basic social problem. The rebirth of my nation is a path to precise differentiation in our society and, therefore, a step towards socialism. I have no desire to view this rebirth any other way."

"So that means not a damn thing will come of your rebirth!" Aglaia retorted coarsely and, cupping her hands, called out to Auntie Klava.

Karamazov gave the girl a victorious look. He wasn't at all insulted—in fact he even felt pleased that she had broken away from her level tone. Her self-confidence both fascinated and at the same time unnerved him, for the better he got to know her, the greater he felt her influence on his outlook.

"Vovchyk isn't at all such a bad interlocutor," Auntie Klava said, coming up. "And, it turns out . . . not at all a Communard."

"Please," the linguist began to fuss. "Don't you know that Dmytriy is a member of the Communist Party."

"Don't worry!" Aglaia said. "We know that . . . and think he won't be angry with Auntie Klava for her frankness."

"That is, you mean to say that Auntie Klava offended me?" Karamazov said.

"We mean to say," Aglaia retorted, "that though Communists aren't such bad people, for the most part they are terribly boring . . . In short, their conception of the world—one can assert with certainty—does not go beyond Chamberlain with a monocle and the upcoming Party-cell huddle . . . True, they also show an interest in Chinese affairs."

Karamazov's face twitched. It pained him that these chance non-Party holidaymakers were being so disrespectful towards his party. Being, so to speak, an eternal oppositionary, he was at the same time a singular fanatic of Communism and plainly could not react calmly to this quite unwarranted insolence.

But the conversation was already over and they were arranging to meet somewhere the next day. The Flaubertian ladies had already disappeared into the darkness of the small apricot yard and Comrade Vovchyk was zealously recounting something about Auntie Klava. Then Dmytriy suddenly remembered Hanna and no longer felt that spite towards her, which had appeared earlier. His heart even ached a little and he said:

"Please, Vovchyk, don't tell Hanna where and with whom we've been strolling today."

"Why is this?" the linguist asked: he had already forgotten their evening conversation, when he himself advised his friend to conceal his meetings with Aglaia from Hanna.

"I want it that way!" Karamazov said. "You must do this for me."

Comrade Vovchyk looked at Dmytriy in surprise, shrugged his shoulders a few times, but of course gave his consent.

"I give my consent," he said. "But one thing, my friend: how did it happen that these Muscovite ladies turned into Ukrainians?"

"That question interests me very much too."

"Meaning, that you know nothing as well?" the amazed linguist asked.

"I know as much as you do."

"Strange. Enigmatic, if you like. My word . . . What do you think?"

"I think it enigmatic too. And I think the ladies are deliberately

creating this mystery around themselves for piquantness."

"This I like, my word!" the linguist exclaimed with satisfaction. "Why not turn an ordinary chance meeting into an interesting adventure? Intrigue is interesting not only in novels, it is a pleasant diversion in real life too."

"I see you're beginning to philosophize," Karamazov smiled.

Comrade Vovchik plainly did not agree with this assertion and said that Dmytriy was an ignorant illiterate and did not understand what philosophy was.

"However," he said, "I'm not on about that. I want to talk about your good fortune. You're terribly lucky, and I'm envious, my word! Really, Aglaia isn't a girl, she's simply a fragrant strawberry. You have quite good taste."

"You're not happy with Auntie Klava?"

"God forbid. On the contrary, it is positively much better to get involved with Auntie Klava . . . It's much safer with a married woman, you know."

Comrade Vovchik roared with delight and pranced about like a young calf.

As Dmitriy and Vovchik were climbing the porch steps, the early provincial roosters were already crowing in the northern part of the remote town.

## V

They met again the next day. Now they met every evening. On the sixth day a storm suddenly broke loose over the summer resort. Clouds covered the whole sky and an abundant rain fell all day long. Large puddles stood in the streets and the wooden sidewalks were badly washed out. Auntie Klava sent a small girl with a note to the Karamazovs and in it she asked the friends not to come out that day. The linguist read through the note and, handing it to Dmytriy, quipped:

"I suppose the girls were right to make just such a decision. What do you think?"

"What can I think," Karamazov said. "Obviously one couldn't devise anything better."

Of course he had lied, for in his opinion the weather wasn't all that bad to necessitate giving up their merry stroll. At worst they could have taken their shoes off—this wasn't the city, nor was it the fall.

"But all the same there's something on your mind," Comrade Vovchik said as he checked the breech in his rifle.

"Nothing at all," Karamazov lied once more and took a few nervous steps about the room.

He couldn't understand at all why there was a slight ache in his heart. Not because he would not be seeing Aglaia today? After all, he had met her the day before and saw her every day. Anyway, he would see her tomorrow and many more *times*. How was he to understand this unexpected ache?

There were sudden voices in the passage and Hanna entered the room.

"Well, boys, what are we going to have for dinner today?" she asked.

"Rissoles, obviously, and mashed potato with cream," Dmytriy replied promptly.

Hanna looked intently at her husband: she wasn't sure whether he was joking or in fact serious.

"Why are you gawking at me?" Karamazov said. "I'm telling you: rissoles and mashed potato with cream."

"And I'm telling you, Dimi," she retorted, "that you are in a bad mood today and are beginning to joke badly with me."

"And I'm telling you," Vovchyk said, throwing his rifle onto the bed, "that I can see that you'll have a quarrel today too . . . This is—God knows what—not a new lifestyle, but some caricature of it."

Karamazov forced a smile and offered his hand to the linguist.

"Thank you, my friend, for the mother truth, and I beg your forgiveness," he said. "Thank him too, my dear Hannusia... Aren't you glad to hear this from non-Party scum?"

"Mind your language, please," Comrade Vovchyk muttered.

"Don't tell me you're offended . . . In that case please accept my apologies a second time, and I would like to announce that I was only joking."

"I know you were joking . . . But all the same, why be so vicious?"

"You see, Vovchyk, I wanted some rissoles and mashed potato with cream."

Hanna jumped up and walked up to the table.

"Dimi!" she said in despair. "Well, why all this? Why are you making our life an endless torment?"

"Oh, my God, what a tragedy!" Dmytriy scoffed. Then Comrade Vovchyk ran up to his friend and began waving his arms about.

"Listen, my friend . . .," he was barely able to utter in his agitation. "I . . . I think that you're not a Communist, but a despot! And I . . . will denounce you still to . . . the control commission."

Karamazov roared with laughter. He was laughing so unpleasantly that the linguist became bewildered and looked about him with surprised eyes.

"You're thinking of denouncing me to the control commission?" Dmytriy asked. "Wonderful! Only be fair, my friend, and denounce a million other Communists at the same time. Or better still, denounce your own self, because you're just as much a cad as me and, finally, scamper off to the heavenly office and denounce the control commission itself."

"Dimi," Hanna said, "you have no respect for yourself nor the party



you belong to. Don't forget that Comrade Vovchik is outside the Party, after all."

"You reckon such questions should be raised at Communist Party cell gatherings?"

"That's exactly what I mean, Dimi. Just that."

Karamazov suddenly settled down. Perhaps it was his wife's soothing tone, perhaps something else.

"Once more I beg you to forgive me," he said. "I really did get a bit hot under the collar."

"Then you admit that Hanna is right to hold you in check?"

Dmytri said nothing in reply. He unexpectedly froze in one position in the middle of the room and stood there for several minutes. It even occurred to Hanna that he was having a relapse. She came up to her husband and took him by the hand.

"Dimi, why are you silent . . . ? What's wrong, Dimi?"

"Nothing special, Hannusia," Karamazov said calmly and seriously. "I'm thinking about our phariseeism and I'm thinking, why? Why aren't we ashamed of talking about mashed potato and rissoles? Why, after all, aren't we ashamed to eat away public money here . . . at the very same time as people around us are living in impossible poverty, in such poverty, that it makes one want to sob . . . Why, after all, are we afraid to make public the bitter truth (even though the public knows about it without us) and therefore hide it in our Communist Party cells?"

"Well, this shed tear and this small caramel candy is quite inappropriate," the linguist said. "In any case they cannot typify you."

"I too think," Hanna added, "that you're going against yourself today. Isn't it you who so defends the slogan 'make way for the strong?'"

Dmytri wanted to say something in reply but at this moment Odarka entered the room and stopped in the doorway.

"At your service!" she said. "Did you call me?"

"At what service?" Dmytri asked in an exceptionally sad voice. "Can't you speak like a human?"

The housemaid looked at her master in silence. Her stony eyes froze on some single spot, and her whole body seemed falsely wooden, like a statue serving a special function. Even Hanna sensed this and, jumping to her feet, hastened to escort Odarka out the door.

"I can't look at her calmly," Karamazov announced, once Odarka's soles rustled in the vestibule. "Sometimes she alarms me so much with her reticence, that by God, I begin to fear for my sanity: I might go insane any moment and dash off somewhere in mad flight."

"You need to take treatment, Dimi," Hanna said. "You're sick, Dimi!"

"Treatment? This isn't it! Not it, my love!" Karamazov sighed. "Here's the point: sometimes you run along—and stop. You stop and stand there. All around you it is so beautiful—the lake, the sky, the haze of the blue

distance, and 'he' stands there, hanging his peepers on you . . . I'm talking about our black piano, Hannuska . . . the one we have in Kharkiv. This is no piano, it's some horrifying spectre. You close your eyes and lie there. And suddenly something nudges you, and take a look. And you see some hairy creature coming for you, out of the piano. It crawls up and sits facing you. I keep silent for a long time, convincing myself that there is nothing there. Then the hairy creature crawls up to me, onto the bed. It is then, Hannuska, that I shout for you to turn the light on. But you never manage to turn it on soon enough, because the hairy creature is terribly nimble and dashes back inside the piano, while you are terribly awkward when you're befuddled with sleep, Hannuska."

"And you seriously believe that this creature lives in the piano?" Comrade Vovchyk asked.

"My word, I don't know!" Karamazov said, smiling somewhat dolefully. "As a Communist I don't believe it exists, but as a resident of that room in Kharkiv I cannot but believe that it exists, for nearly every night I am forced to disturb my wife."

"You really do need to seek treatment," Comrade Vovchyk said.

"You're on about medicine too? What terrible cranks you are! My word, you're cranks!" Karamazov looked at his friend and guffawed unexpectedly. "Oh, what cranks you are! Haven't you noticed that I've been playing the fool all this time? Obviously I wouldn't make a bad actor."

"Well, to hell with you!" the linguist exploded and hastily left the room.

The whole day, and then the whole night Dmytriy could find no peace of mind from the image of the girl in the pink dress holding a pale-blue parasol, a girl who had been so quick to call him 'darling', who spoke with such interest about Old French life ("you know the poet Villon?"), who sensed the immortal Flaubert in night market alleys and who in the end, during his spiritual crisis, appeared before him as such an interesting interlocutor.

He fell asleep after it became completely light. His sleep was restless and he awoke some two hours later. The sun was already high in the clear blue sky and burned his head with a heavy fire. The first thing he saw was Hanna. She was sitting on the sofa holding a letter. Dmytriy grimaced with displeasure: it was the note from Auntie Klava. Hanna glanced at her husband and asked him in a level voice:

"Who is this letter from, Dimi?"

"Read it more carefully and you'll probably guess yourself," he said, turning away towards the wall.

"It's from *those* ladies!"

"It seems to me my letters are none of your business," Karamazov retorted harshly. "Who asked you to go snooping in my paper-holder?"

Hanna looked in amazement at her husband.

"I came across this note quite by accident," she said. "I needed some

money for sugar... so there's no need to get upset. Didn't you allow me free access to your things before, without giving any special instructions? Or maybe you have something to hide from me now? Then you should say so!"

Dmytriy glanced at his wife. She was speaking so frankly, her eyes were so sad, that he suddenly felt a feeling of revulsion towards himself.

"Do forgive me, Hannusia," he said. "I really was too harsh... But my frame of mind is to blame: I slept very badly today."

Karamazov embraced Hanna and began caressing her. At last he confirmed her assumption. The note was plainly from *those ladies*. But so what? Auntie Klava (he began speaking of this very lady almost unconsciously, without mentioning Aglaia) was such a petty bourgeois, and he understood that very well. Or perhaps she imagined that he would eventually fall in love with her? Then this wasn't very serious at all.

Hanna's heart quickened its beat and she rested her alarmed gaze on her husband.

- "And you're speaking the truth?" she asked.

"What's the matter with you, Hannuska?" Karamazov said. "What truth are you getting at?"

"This one," Hanna sighed. "It didn't even occur to me to suspect you of anything serious, Dimi, but now I'm surprised at your eloquence."

"Well, now you don't even like my eloquence," Karamazov was holding his wife's lightly tanned ear between his teeth and looking in bewilderment at the ceiling. He realized that he had given himself away while still befuddled with sleep and that this could not be righted now. And so, when Hanna stubbornly repeated her question: "you're speaking the truth?," he exploded with spite.

"No," he said sharply. "I'm lying!"

Hanna knew her husband well and expected such an answer. But she also knew that after such outbursts he lost all his will power.

"Ah, Dimi! My God, Dimi! What are you doing to yourself? The point isn't these female holidaymakers at all. Don't tell me you think I no longer have any respect for myself?"

Dmytriy listened to his wife, but heard nothing. At this moment he couldn't have listened to her, for thoughts and feelings had suddenly deserted him and he lay there like a piece of dead meat. That always happened to him after a quarrel with Hanna.

"Ah, Dimi! You think that way of me quite wrongly. Introduce me to these ladies and I'll prove it to you... Will you promise to introduce me...? Well?"

"I'll do everything... you want," Dmytriy said. "Only please, leave the room."

Hanna didn't need much beseeching and in a minute or so she was no longer in the room. Then Karamazov took out his swimming trunks from his suitcase and, calling to Comrade Vovchyk, he went with him down to the river.

"Just look at those faces passing us," the linguist said, ordering his retriever to heel. "Notice how they stare at us: my word, like enemies. What psychology! If you've come for a holiday, then you must be an aristocrat."

"They are obviously right in thinking that way."

"So, according to you, all the resort buildings should be pulled down?"

"In my opinion we should drop the subject, because we won't get past empty phrases anyway. If these savages refuse to perceive the working man in you and refuse to understand that in the course of a year or two this man has the right to relax for a month, then your indignation is quite justified. But, on the other hand, they're quite justified to be indignant at you because, first of all, you're not alone—there are thousands like you—and secondly, not all of these thousands know how to behave correctly with these people and, thirdly, compared to them, we really are aristocrats."

"In short, a dead end here too?" Comrade Vovchyk said.

"What do you mean by that?"

"I just mean that you really are a tragic figure. You see only hopelessness everywhere."

"Obviously it's a part of my nature," Dmytriy said and gave a big yawn.

They were coming up to the river. Dockers were fussing about on the jetty, unloading something from the carts. The steamer was not yet in sight, nor was there any breeze, so the river surface was mirror-smooth. The morning was exceptional: after the rains the nights had become progressively cooler, and the night coolness hovered over the water until the sun rose.

"Well, soon we'll begin our hunting," Comrade Vovchyk said and moaned with pleasure.

Karamazov untied his canoe and, moving some six yards offshore, they dived into the water.

And then someone nearby burst out laughing. Karamazov looked around and spied Aglaia and Auntie Klava dressed in bathing costumes. They were standing on the river beach, preparing to enter the water.

"Greetings, my turtledoves!" Comrade Vovchyk yelled.

"The best to you, dear chap!" Auntie Klava replied in a scream. Dmytriy was having difficulty breathing. He caught up to his canoe and climbed into it. All night long Aglaia had given him no peace, all night he dreamed of meeting her (as if he hadn't seen her for a hundred years), and then in the morning he suddenly met her in a bathing costume. For the first time the true anxious buck awoke in him. He looked shamelessly at her groin, her breasts, and couldn't take his eyes off her. He wanted to laugh, and with such wild abandon as primitive man had roared. He even had a thought of swimming up to the Flaubertian ladies and, in jest, grabbing Aglaia in an embrace.

"Come on, show me how well you can swim?" Aglaia yelled out to

Karamazov and threw out her chest, as if she was about to fly over to him.

"Ah, mon Dieu! Que dites-vous là," Comrade Vovchyk called out.

"You're here too, mon ami? You too? Que vous êtes aimable de venir me surprendre ainsi."

"But the compensation, mademoiselle. J'espère que vous me ferez l'amitié de diner avec moi."

"C'est une grave question qui demande réflexion."

"Think about it, please. Because I've gotten some wonderful wine for lunch."

Comrade Vovchyk was already sitting in the canoe opposite Dmytri and was slowly rowing towards the beach.

"You know," he said, addressing his friend. "As for that mystery our ladies are hiding behind, it can be deciphered after all."

"How?"

"Very simply," the linguist laughed quietly. "We'll get them drunk on some good strong wine—and they'll tell us everything."

"You think so?"

"I'm certain of it . . . Especially since the ladies aren't averse to having a drink with us sometime. Only recently Auntie Klava told me straight out that she wanted to go on a drinking spree."

Karamazov liked the idea too. Not because he wanted to 'decipher' the Muscovite ladies, as Comrade Vovchyk had said (the mystery interested him less and less with each passing day), but because today he had seen Agalia's beautiful body, because he wanted to nibble at her. It occurred to him that a drinking spree could create a good setting for this, and he was already intensely seeking a place for the orgy.

"I see that you share my idea," Comrade Vovchyk said.

"I share it wholeheartedly."

"Well then, give me a hand, my friend. I intend to storm our ladies now and expect that we'll be getting drunk with them this evening."

"But where shall we get together with them?" Karamazov asked.

"I've already thought about that. We'll get into the canoe at about eight, take what we need with us and make for Zelena Spit. We can even light a fire there."

Zelena Spit? Wonderful. Why hadn't it occurred to him? This was such a cozy spot, that they needed nothing better. They could even stay the night there . . . sleep in the hayricks.

"That's a good idea," Karamazov said. "You have my enthusiastic support."

Comrade Vovchyk groaned with pleasure once more and fell silent; they were already near the Flaubertian ladies.

"What secrets are you whispering about there?" Auntie Klava asked, when the canoe rested easily on the sand of the beach.

"I was just telling Vovchyk," Dmytri piped up, "that it is already time

for me to introduce you to my wife."

"Are you serious about this?" Aglaia asked, screwing up her eyes.

"Quite serious... and we'll do it this way: I'll introduce you to Hanna and you'll introduce us to Auntie Klava's husband."

Aglaia hastened to agree. Besides, she reckoned they had to do this that very evening.

"Only not today," Comrade Vovchyk remarked and informed the ladies of his plan for a drinking spree.

The ladies accepted the plan, but Aglaia said that first of all she wanted to meet Hanna.

"Why 'first of all'?" Dmytriy asked, displeased. "There'll still be time enough for this."

"But there'll also be time enough for the drinking spree," Aglaia persisted.

She was so insistent on having her way, that in a few minutes Vovchyk was already losing his temper. Then, unexpectedly, the ladies began to dress and demonstratively left the beach.

"Why the hell did you have to talk about this introduction?" the linguist said unhappily.

However, Karamazov was damning himself for the indiscretion. In any case the friends already knew Aglaia and understood that no spree was possible until they had satisfied this capricious and stubborn girl.

## VI

They managed to bring Aglaia and Hanna together only on the fourth day after their conversation on the river beach. This happened in the evening outside the gate on exactly the same spot where the Flaubertian ladies began their usual stroll with their partners. The meeting was cool, and Hanna especially sensed this.

"Why do you shun the community so much?" Aglaia asked, slipping her arm through that of Karamazov's wife.

"What makes you think that?" Hanna raised her eyebrows in turn.

"Now, come on! All the time we've been living here, and we haven't seen you out in the street once. Isn't that reticence?"

"Hanna is a terrible individualist," Comrade Vovchyk joked.

For no reason at all Auntie Klava began to giggle thinly and nastily.

"Now I think there's quite a different reason for that," Aglaia said. "What do you think, Dimi?"

Karamazov flinched. He never expected that Aglaia would be so intimate with him in front of Hanna.

"I missed what you were discussing," he said, turning red. "What were you going on about there?"

"You mean me?"

"Well yes, you!" he said.

"Just think, Auntie Klava," Aglaia laughed. "He's already addressing me familiarly."<sup>11</sup>

"Ha, ha!" the other Flaubertian lady again giggled thinly and nastily.

An awkward situation had developed. So awkward, that even Comrade Vovchyk sensed it.

"You didn't understand Dmytriy," Hanna suddenly said in a calm voice. "By this 'you' he meant you and me."

"Do you confirm that, Dimi?" Aglaia asked and looked attentively, even with a certain respect, at Hanna.

"Of course," Dmytriy shrugged his shoulders and took out his cigarette case.

He was already in full control and his face was calm.

"Well then," Aglaia said. "Could it be that you come out into the street so rarely because you don't wish to meet with petty bourgeois women . . . ? Escaping from the plebeian environment, so to speak? Am I correct?"

"I just don't know who you mean by the petty bourgeoisie," Hanna said calmly.

"Who I mean? Well, even myself, Auntie Klava, and so on."

"I know so little about you, that I dare not risk taking you for a petty bourgeois yet."

"Well, and when you come to know us—you'll dare risk it then?"

Hanna took her plait and placed it on her chest. She remained silent for a few seconds and then said at last: "There's nothing even to risk here. If you're petty bourgeois, then you're petty bourgeois . . . But I expect that I am dealing with a different kind of person."

Auntie Klava placed her pale-blue parasol like a rifle onto her shoulder and saluted with her right hand.

"Glad to make the effort, your excellency!" she said succinctly, addressing Comrade Vovchyk.

Once more an awkward situation followed. Hanna obviously realized that Auntie Klava was making fun of her, but this time she could no longer defuse the tense atmosphere and looked away in silence.

"Let's forget these conversations," Comrade Vovchyk said.

"Why do that?" Aglaia retorted. "The subject is very interesting. . . What do you think, Dimi?"

Karamazov said nothing in reply to the question and suddenly took a few steps away from the group.

"Please wait a couple of minutes for me. I'll be back presently."

"Where are you intending to escape to?" Aglaia said, not without some irony.

"I don't intend to escape anywhere," Karamazov remarked harshly. "I'm going to the buffet for a drink of water."

"And why do you think we don't feel like some water? Right, Hanna?"

"Yes, I'd like some water too," Mrs. Karamazov said.

"Well then, let's all go then," Dmytriï remarked unhappily.

They were already standing in the middle of the market, not far from "the buffet of the best violet wine of I. L. Karasyk." It was for this buffet that they set off.

"I think," Aglaia said, as she moved up the porch, "that the respected I. L. Karasyk will treat us not only to his violet wine, but also to some holy water, eh?"

"What are you referring to, madam?" the manager asked with a pleasant smile.

"I'm referring to holy water, that is—vodka."

"You obviously think that apart from violet wine, I also sell vodka 'under the counter'," I. L. Karasyk said offendedly.

"I not only think, but I'm certain that it is so."

The manager gazed with satisfaction at his guests and suddenly began fussing about between the tables. "Well, if you're so certain, then let it be your way . . . What kind of vodka do you want and how much of it will you manage?"

The company roared with laughter: such a reply was long overdue. There was no need to swagger. Didn't they know that I. L. Karasyk was an amiable person, and like any amiable person knew how to do people a favor. .

"Are we going to be drinking seriously?" Karamazov said (he had wanted to say 'do you intend to drink seriously', but somehow couldn't bring himself to it in Hanna's presence).

"Of course!" Aglaia said. "Why shouldn't we drink? Didn't you offer to organize a drinking spree for me?"

Karamazov turned red and raised his eyebrows. This cynicism which Aglaia was flaunting today was beginning to unnerve him. He moved sharply with his whole body and proceeded to a far table. He was followed by Auntie Klava and Vovchuk; the linguist was also displeased.

"Dimi is a terrible crank," Aglaia was saying, taking Hanna by the hand, acting as if nothing had happened. "This morning, you know, he nearly created a scandal because I didn't want to drink with him . . . And now, for some reason, he's refusing to drink himself."

Hanna looked coolly at Aglaia.

"I just don't understand why you are telling me this," she said.

"What do you mean, why? So that you will drink with me, because I want very much to have a drink right now."

"Unfortunately, I have no such desire. Let's walk in the fresh air instead."

"You don't drink at all . . . ? Or are you merely refusing a drink now?"

"Why shouldn't I drink?" Hanna forced a smile. "Occasionally I drink too, but right now I don't want to. I imagine that you have no such desire either: people don't drink vodka in such oppressive heat."



Aglaia took Mrs. Karamazov by the hand again and looked at her sympathetically.

"You're right that it's oppressive," she said. "But it's not the oppressive heat alone; I still think that it's hard for you—for you Communists."

"Why is it hard for us...? Your sympathy is quite misplaced."

"Are you allowed to drink vodka?" Aglaia asked with feigned surprise.

"Of course, we can. Haven't you heard? But in moderation, as they say."

"In short, the golden mean? Well, that's all right too. So do me a favor and drink with me 'in moderation'."

Without waiting for a reply, she ran up to the keeper and suggested that he place a bottle of vodka on one of the tables. Then, dashing up to the company, she grabbed Karamazov and Comrade Vovchik by the hand and dragged them over to Hanna.

"I don't think it's worth drinking now either," Comrade Vovchik said. "It really is terribly oppressive."

"Well, this one's singing the same song... And what were you telling me this morning?"

Karamazov glanced at Aglaia and took a decisive step towards the keeper.

"Do you have a booth where we could sit?" he asked.

"Of course we have one!" I. L. Karasyk became offended all of a sudden.

"That's long overdue!" Aglaia said and took Hanna by the hand for something like the fifth time. "He's a quaint little crank, this Dimi, a terribly unstable character... Have you been living with him for long?"

Auntie Klava came up to Hanna and took her by the hand too. "My word, I like you," she said. "I've always been angry with Dmytriy for treating you this way."

"I don't follow you!" Hanna retorted and looked in confusion at Comrade Vovchik; she suddenly felt like a small baited animal.

"Well, come on," Auntie Klava announced. "Is that good behavior, if he was able to bring you out in public only today?"

"It has nothing to do with Dmytriy. I myself didn't want to go out anywhere."

"Yourself? Well, that's a different matter. Comrade Hanna is obviously relaxing, putting on pounds, so to speak. That's not bad at all."

They were already sitting in the booth and the keeper was fussing around them. Karamazov had become transformed. If half an hour earlier he had been morose, a merry smile was now playing on his face, and he liberally meted out witticisms and poured out wisdom. Aglaia's cynicism, which had at first stunned him, soon became the source from which he had drawn the magic water which had put him in this so-called 'devil-may-care'

mood. He knew full well that Hanna had been eager to return home for some time, that the Flaubertian ladies would give her no peace, and finally, he knew that things were possibly close to a scandal already, but all this together not only didn't alarm him, all this egged him on to do what he would definitely have refrained from doing any other time. He remembered that morning, remembered Aglaia's body, and he wanted to torment Hanna—to torment her for not letting him take that body... and for generally standing so stubbornly in his way.

"Well, and who's going to drink?" the linguist waved his hand helplessly when the keeper filled the goblets.

"You don't intend having any?" Aglaia said. "Well, then it'll be the three of us... You of course won't be drinking either, Hanna?"

"No, I won't."

"Good... What toast shall we dream up? *Avancez un peu*," she addressed Hanna once more.

"My French is pretty bad."

"She says," Auntie Klava remarked sloppily, with self-respect, "for you to move a little."

"Mille pardons for the French. But, *messieurs*, *laissez-moi seulement m'installer*."

Aglaia suddenly lifted her goblet and downed the vodka. Auntie Klava and Karamazov drank with her too.

"Now we can think of a toast," Aglaia said after a second goblet. "Company, I drank to the courageous and willful people. Hear that? I drank to the insanity of the brave. But not to the insanity which degenerated in the Sorrentian philistine Peshkov<sup>12</sup>—I drank to the insanity which brought the troglodyte to the state of refined European man. I drank to the insanity which knows no impasses and burns with the eternal flame of yearning for unknown lands. I drank to the insanity of the conquistadors... Do you understand me, Hanna? Allow me to introduce myself. I am the new person of our time. I am one of those young people growing up like mushrooms around your Communist Party cells and whom you do not notice. Dmytriy Karamazov, do you know who sits before you. Oh, you do not know who sits before you, as Gogol would have said. This is your antipode. But, I see you still don't understand me, my friends. Ah, my dear friends... Let's drink to insanity once more."

Aglaia emptied her goblet once more. Her face was flushed and her eyes shone with a chimerical gleam. Karamazov watched the girl in rapture.

"And I also want to add, my friends, that even though it sounds strange, I was borne by nothing short of your party cell. It is my true mother... Well, imagine... A girl is growing up in an institute somewhere. A girl who is dubbed 'blood with milk.' By nature she has been drawn to ebullience—not the one which Komsomolizes into emptiness... Well, let's

say, with some boring talk or 'wretched alley' but the one that is, say, Perovska.<sup>13</sup> And the Party cell summons her and says: 'Allright, you aware young lady, you'll be one of our candidates for the Komsomol . . . What's your parentage . . . ?' "

"What the hell do I need that parentage for? Was it I who picked my father? He made me!"

"Your parentage must be a little suspect then," Comrade Vovchyk said.

"And what do you think, Hanna? My parentage is a little suspect, yes?"

"I think it's time for me to go home," Hanna said and rose from her chair.

"No, wait! I haven't finished yet," Aglaia took Hanna roughly by the hand and sat her back down. "So then. What am I to do? You know, *by nature I've been drawn to ebullience*, and I want to create life. Not the way you create it, Hanna, and not the way you do, Dmytriy Karamazov (she downed another goblet of vodka), but the way it was created for thousands of years . . . You will of course say that I am preaching the ideology of the new bourgeoisie—have it our way. But I will have it my way too, because we—I and thousands of other Aglaias in skirts and pants—cannot continue to live without air."

"You must be feeling quite hot!" Hanna suddenly retorted ironically.

"Parbleu, j'étouffe. Je vous prie de baisser la glace, pour nous donner un peu d'air."

"I told you before, my French is bad."

"She says," Auntie Klava said with spite, "that she is suffocating and begs you to open a window."

"Ah, now that's quite a different matter," Hanna replied with irony once more.

Karamazov suddenly jumped to his feet and came up to his wife.

"You obviously want to go home, Hanna!" he said sharply. "I can see you home now."

"I'm not a bit drunk and have no intention of going home," Hanna said calmly.

"However I do!" Karamazov retorted. "Let's go."

Auntie Klava and Vovchyk got up too. So did Aglaia. "I had a foreboding that nothing nice would come of this meeting," Auntie Klava said.

"And what was supposed to come of it?" the linguist asked naively.

The lady tugged him lightly by the nose and offered her hand to be kissed. She finally calmed down and told him to come to them the next day with Karamazov: why shouldn't they drive down to the town of K. for a few hours. In short, they still needed to become better acquainted with K. The trip would probably be interesting, for the weather was beautiful and

then they could glean fresh impressions on the steamer. Comrade Vovchyk agreed. Then Auntie Klava slipped her arm through Karamazov's and made him the same proposition.

Dmytriy agreed too and, resting Auntie Klava's parasol on his shoulder, allowed Aglaia and Hanna to pass ahead: both women walked in silence the whole way.

"All the same, it's joyous to live 'in this world, ladies and gentlemen'," Aglaia said. "Those are your words, aren't they, Dimi?"

Karamazov said nothing. He was reflecting. He was thinking about what Aglaia had recently been talking about, and thought chased after thought. He really had come across an interesting girl. And it now persistently occurred to him that this meeting might end in a small drama and that the principal characters in this drama would be obviously three people: he, Aglaia and Hanna.

"Company," said Comrade Vovchyk. "Which of you settled with I. L. Karasyk?"

The linguist was answered with silence: obviously no one had even thought about this.

"Well, I can only describe such behavior towards the keeper as caddishness."

"Nothing of the sort," said Auntie Klava. "There's no need to worry about I. L. Karasyk: if he didn't collect the bill today, then he'll do so tomorrow. And it's better for him to collect it tomorrow, because then you'll buy something else from him."

"That's true!" the linguist agreed. "The reasoning is correct. Any old Pererepenko would never think of this."

## VII

When the friends came up to the house where the ladies were staying the following day, Aglaia met them with a displeased face and said that it didn't at all become partners to be late a whole half hour. In short, Auntie Klava had become incensed and had left alone. Aglaia, of course, was no longer angry with them and invited them inside. By the way, they would make the acquaintance of Zhenia (the man with the gold pince-nez). At the moment he had a terrible toothache... obviously the tooth of castrated wisdom.

"Please!" Aglaia said and opened the door. "Step inside, gentlemen!"

The friends were greeted with the scent of refined perfumery. They could smell powder and perfume, and it seemed that every corner and every thing in this house had soaked up this heady smell. Several vases of flowers stood on the dresser and French novels lay on the windowsills. Comrade Vovchyk began talking about the previous evening. But Aglaia

obviously had no desire to speak about this.

"It seems to me that I acted yesterday as I always do," she said.

"Undeniably!" the linguist hastened to agree and, replacing some old-fashioned French novel he had flicked through onto the windowsill, he said:

"Well, and where's your man with the gold pince-nez?"

"We'll call him presently," Aglaia said. "Yevheniy Valentynovych! Come out here."

Someone began fussing about behind the door leading to another room and at last a man with a gold pince-nez appeared in the doorway.

"Yevheniy Valentynovych," Aglaia introduced him. "Auntie Klava's husband."

The new person shook hands with the friends in silence and began to run about the room, holding onto the aching tooth the whole time. This typical intellectual from the trade-union—polite and fragile—had for now forgotten his nice tone and took no notice of the friends. Karamazov looked at him intently and thought that this man in the gold pince-nez definitely had to be Yevheniy Valentynovych, that there was no other name he could be called. Not Ivanovych or Petrovych, and not Denys or Stepan, only Yevheniy Valentynovych. True, he could also have been called Valentyn Yevhenievych. But in essence it was the same thing.

"You are obviously surprised that I have so many French novels," Aglaia said, addressing Vovchuk.

"If you like, I'm very surprised," the linguist said. "Even terribly surprised."

"And if I don't like?"

"Then I can refrain from astonishment. In short, I wish to satisfy you... what do you think?"

Aglaia told Karamazov that she had already changed her opinion of Vovchuk and that she was beginning to like him now. The linguist thanked her for the compliment.

"Well, all the same: why do you have so many French novels?" Karamazov inquired.

"You see, this is my inheritance from my great-grandfather. He left me quite a good library."

"Your great-grandfather wasn't a cultured landowner?"

"How can I put it . . . One would say yes. Actually, not quite yes, but yes all the same.

"Perhaps you could tell me his surname? Not Prince Volkonsky,<sup>14</sup> I imagine?"

"Why should it obviously be Volkonsky, and not some Mazepa?"<sup>15</sup>

"Because just as to the first, so also to the second, you have the same attitude as I have towards Chandzolin,<sup>16</sup> for instance."

"It's useless thinking that way!" Aglaia said and made a cunning face

as if to say that she preferred to remain silent now, but that in time Karamazov would not only hear the name—he would even be somewhat astounded.”

“Maybe I am mistaken!” Dmytriy remarked and immediately thought that Aglaia was trying to intrigue him all the more. The Muscovite roots, and her relatively immaculate Ukrainian, and finally, the cultured great-grandfather—all this confirmed his assumption.

Comrade Vovchyk wanted to express his sympathy to the man with the gold pince-nez:

“Your tooth must really be hurting,” he said. “I know what it’s like, it’s something horrible.”

“Um-ha!” Yevheniy Valentynovych replied and grabbed at his cheek once more. “Um-ha.”

Then the linguist slapped himself on the knees and began to assure him, the man in the gold pince-nez, that it made obvious sense for him to visit the dentist. Vovchyk had met this dentist several days earlier and considered him to be a terribly likeable person. Wasn’t Yevheniy Valentynovych at all interested in seeking help from this physician? Vovchyk was certain that the man with the gold pince-nez would not regret it. Well . . . then?

“Of course he must go,” Aglaia spoke up for her relative, who was unable to utter anything more than “um-ha.”

Well, that was fine! They would visit the dentist and the tooth would stop troubling him in an hour or so . . . Did Aglaia also want to come for the walk? Perhaps then Dmytriy would not be averse to joining them too? In short, they could all go. True, it was oppressive outside, but one had to help people out. Did Yevheniy Valentynovych play soccer? No? Then he must certainly play chess. Yes? Well, good. After his tooth stopped hurting they would play a game of chess.

“But when will you take Yevheniy Valentynovych to the dentist?” Aglaia reminded him with a smile.

Comrade Vovchyk began to fuss about: he would do this immediately and with great eagerness. In short, they should prepare to leave right away.

“Ah, how talkative you are,” Aglaia said. “Isn’t it time for you to act? You will of course take Zhenia on your own, for there’s no sense in all of us frying in the sun.”

Comrade Vovchyk began to fuss about even more. He understood perfectly well that they had to see the physician immediately and the company had nothing to do with it. He grabbed his small hat, opened the door and let the man with the gold pince-nez out into a gust of hot wind. Yevheniy Valentynovych grabbed hold of his red beard and almost ran outside. Thus the room emptied, leaving Dmytriy and Aglaia on their own.

“Well, thank God,” the girl remarked and heaved a sigh of relief. “He’s been such a nuisance with his tooth that one almost feels like escaping to Moscow.”

Karamazov said nothing. His heart suddenly began to beat anxiously. Until yesterday he had felt much calmer. Of course, he had taken a liking to Aglaia from the very start, of course he had once let slip that he wanted to get together with her. But that had only been a misty premonition and he had never sought conversation about love, he had always spoken with Aglaia as with any ordinary intelligent comrade.

Now it wasn't the same thing. He suddenly sensed her presence in this town physiologically, so to speak, and this sensation had not begun yesterday, but more likely that evening when he hadn't managed to meet her, when he had suffered so badly the whole night long. No, not even that evening—it stemmed from his first meeting with her on the steamer. Thousands of invisible psychological threads tied them together until yesterday, and yesterday was merely a logical and inevitable conclusion. Had it been accidental that she showed him her body in a bathing suit? Had it been accidental that she acted suggestively all evening long? Against the background of their morning meeting had that apology for the insanity of the courageous been accidental, that meeting when she stood on the beach in torrents of sunshine and demonstrated her healthy Rubenesque body to him? There was nothing accidental; any incident was connected with this or that base and it was conditioned by certain reasons, and if the reasons existed, it could have been no other way. And remembering her talk about the insanity of the courageous, he painfully wanted to be just as insane. He wanted to grab her in his arms and yell with the victorious roar of a savage conqueror. For a moment he pictured the sad, extremely irritating eyes of his Hanna, and then he saw nothing more. He didn't stop to consider how Aglaia would react to his advances. At this moment he wasn't even influenced by the setting, which definitely did not correspond to his intentions. He no longer saw anything else apart from this attractive girl and her almond gaze.

Karamazov looked brazenly at Aglaia's torso and rested his eyes on it.

## VIII

And he was obviously right. Otherwise why would the servant have been closing the shutters? Perhaps Aglaia wanted to keep out the heat? But no, that could not be! She was undoubtedly seeking a twilight atmosphere. He had only to be decisive.

The room was getting dark with that daytime darkness when, even with eyes closed, one could sense a clear cloudless sky and the scorched empty streets of the remote town. A fiery paw of southern sun pushed in through one of the shutters and, splashing against the vases of roses, fell easily onto the wall.

Aglaia adjusted the décolleté of her pink dress and looked up at Karamazov.

"Dmytriy, come closer to me," she said. "Do you want some apricot water?"

"No, thank you," Karamazov replied and stopped beside the girl.

"Don't want any? Then I'll have some myself." She came up to the pitcher and sat down with it in her former place. Swallowing the yellowish water in small gulps, she was telling him something about Yevheniy Valentynovych and suddenly became curious about his family matters. In short, she wanted to find out more about him, and she was especially interested in facts of a deeply intimate nature, so to speak. Well, for instance: what, after all, was his relationship with his wife like? She had once assured him that he didn't love his Hanna, but that had only been in jest. She, of course, knew nothing, but she was very curious how he felt about his wife.

While Aglaia had been posing questions in general, so to speak, Karamazov had been prepared to answer her. But when she began to speak unceremoniously about Hanna, his heart contracted unpleasantly: he was unexpectedly offended over his wife. Why didn't Aglaia leave her in peace? Several minutes earlier he would never have thought that such a feeling could have been awakened in him. But now it even disturbed him. Of course he no longer loved her, he even detested Hanna today. But such beautiful moments were associated with her that he could not help but feel a unique respect for her. In any case he positively refused to mention her name in front of Aglaia today, at least this was what the norms of elementary ethics dictated to him.

"Perhaps we could leave Hanna in peace?" Karamazov asked. "Haven't you already tired of talking about her?"

"Why so?" Aglaia looked at him with childish eyes. "In my opinion she's still a very interesting woman."

"I believe there is no place for her in our conversation."

"In our conversation? There you go! Why in our conversation?"

Aglaia shrugged her right shoulder and said:

"You're certain of this? Well, then, all right! I'll leave her in peace."

She grew silent and Karamazov said nothing either. The conversation broke off at a very unfortunate place and it seemed that somehow someone had been insulted. It occurred to Dmytriy that Aglaia understood the reason for his reluctance to talk about Hanna and he felt awkward. Why not chat intimately after all?

"You want very much to know how I regard Hanna?" he asked.

With a quick movement Aglaia smoothed the dress on her knees, looked away to the side somewhere, remained silent a while, and suddenly said in a quiet, though resolute and obstinate voice:

"I very much want to know this."

"Well then: our relationship has been strained for a long time now. Approximately three years."



"How am I to take that—have you fallen out of love with her, or am I to infer something else?"

"You see," Karamazov said, "it's hard for me to ascertain this. I can't say that I've stopped loving her. But then I can't say that I love her either."

Aglaia rose from her chair, went up to the sofa and lit a cigarette.

"You mean to say," she announced, "that you've never loved her?"

"I don't mean that, because it's not at all like that. I loved her very much. It's more complicated than that. It's... how can I put it...?"

He became silent and smiled. He himself found it amusing how difficult it was to explain this family story.

"Well, what comes next?" Aglaia laughed. "How does it continue, my inept little boy?"

Karamazov suddenly became irritated by her familiarity and he said sharply:

"I refuse to say any more."

"How strange you are, Dimi," and Aglaia looked at him with sad eyes, "and what an unhappy person you are all the same, my blockhead... That's how I even saw you when we first met."

Dmytriya laughed: he was terribly fond of this self-confidence. Who had told her such absurd things about him? However he was not taking offense. She could continue talking, and in the same vein too.

"Of course I can continue talking," Aglaia said calmly. "But you must forget your self-esteem and stop being so self-confident. In short, let's consider that the scythe has struck a rock. A strong person has met his match... Although, to tell the truth, I see nothing in you of either the scythe or the rock."

Her last phrase left a sharp pain in his heart. He had nothing in him of either the scythe or the rock? He—whom she had recently considered to be a strong, willful person. Was she joking, or speaking the truth? Karamazov became confused and stood before Aglaia like an offended urchin: "What does that mean?"

"That means," Aglaia said, "that there's no need to insult a person who does not deserve it—that's one thing. Secondly, by this I want to say that I know you no worse than you know yourself."

"What do you know about me?" Dmytriya asked almost in despair, and felt his heart sinking. "Didn't you take me for a strong person?"

"Unfortunately yes, just as you considered yourself to be one," she announced.

Aglaia could see how her words were affecting Karamazov, but this time she was obviously consciously making them vicious. What had prompted her to sneer at him? Female revenge for his protective attitude to Hanna, or something else? In any case she gave herself free rein this time. This time she said many more unpleasant things than ever before.

"You, Dmytriya Karamazov, are a terribly self-confident person," she

was saying, "but at the same time you don't believe in your own powers . . . You probably never expected to hear this new evaluation from me? Right? You love to mention courage and will power, Dmytriy Karamazov, and you are undoubtedly courageous and strong-willed. But at the same time, Dmytriy Karamazov, you are a big coward and a terribly weak-willed person. You bow before culture and you are indisputably a civilized person. But at the same time you are a terrible ignoramus. In short, Dmytriy Karamazov, you are an abortion of the thirties . . . for these years will be characterized by historians by this very label . . . I presume you're not offended by such a characterization?"

There was, of course, nothing for him to be offended by, although—if the truth were known—the characterization was just as brutal as the surprise. Although he still couldn't understand what it was for. Why had it entered her head to shower him with such compliments on this very day? He couldn't understand that at all.

"You don't understand?" Aglaia said. "What a pity! It's a very simple matter. My dear, do you really not understand? Don't you understand that I want to abandon this game of ignorance?"

"I don't understand what you mean by this 'game of ignorance'," Karamazov announced and felt his former humor returning. He looked at her cheerfully and even asked if she knew what was the matter with him. What had happened to him in the space of a second or so?

"I know, my dear," Aglaia said, noticing the change in mood of her interlocutor. "But all the same, let's return to your family affairs. Let's put it this way: when did you get together with Hanna? Well, just briefly."

"When did I get together with Hanna?"

Aglaia was not mistaken. Karamazov had resolved to make an excursion into the past. The mood produced its effect, and he began, surprising even himself. He began with the fact that he had met his wife in the besieged city at a time when everyone there was wearily looking toward the north. It was late September and cold. The Red Guard was retreating and, as it did, was barely able to contain the victor's regiments. Karamazov dreamed of the distant past: the constable on the corner, the bare park in the fall, and the music in the cinema—boring and sad. He came to the Cheka. At the time they were preparing to leave. The floor was littered with piles of paper, rags and underwear. He stopped in the doorway and watched the ladies digging about in the junk, stuffing it into their handbags. Just then Hanna came up to him (he later learned it was Hanna). She squeezed her head in anguish and pressed against the door. Then he removed his Browning from its holster and came up to one of the chests around which the rag women were fussing. He shot one of the ladies in the back of the head. That very day the Cheka executed a few more marauders, and that very day Hanna and Dmytriy got together.

"That's all?" Aglaia said when Karamazov had stopped. "You've

finished your story?"

"That's it!" Dmytriy replied, again feeling a certain awkwardness ("really, why this unnecessary frankness?").

"If that's all, then it will suffice for me... I don't need to know anything more from you."

"What do you mean: do I love my wife or not?" Karamazov forced a smile.

"You'll hear about that in two to three weeks," Aglaia said quite seriously. "Meanwhile, let's change the subject."

She took hold of his head and lay it on her knees. Karamazov flinched: the heady scent of the perfume and the roses made his head spin. The white paw of Southern sunshine hurt his eyes and the daytime twilight in the room provoked a sweet languor. Almost unexpectedly Dmytriy began to stroke Aglaia's knee, and possibly because she seemed not to react to this, he clasped her legs in an embrace a few minutes later and with a soft shriek dug his teeth into her soft flesh.

"What's the matter with you?" Aglaia said sternly and forcefully pushed him away. "What's the matter with you, Dimi?"

Karamazov rose. His bewildered eyes dashed back and forth across the ceiling and it seemed that at any moment he would fall to the floor in epileptic convulsions.

"What's the matter with you, Dmytriy?" Aglaia repeated in a gentle voice this time. "How could you bring yourself to do such a thing? And with a woman whose acquaintance you made such a short time ago? You know, I didn't expect such boldness from you! Perhaps you took me for a woman of easy morals? Well? ... Why are you silent?"

"Forgive me!" Karamazov could barely utter. "I acted quite unexpectedly."

Aglaia adjusted her pink dress, rose from the sofa, and said: "And what if I tell Hanna about this? Well?"

Dmytriy made no reply. Then Aglaia came up to him and took his face into her hands:

"Well, it's all right," she said. "I'm not offended. In fact—I'll admit it openly—I even enjoyed it when you bit me. I've become convinced that you are as passionate as my imagination had painted you. Hear that...? I'm not offended!"

It occurred to Karamazov that the girl was simply joking with him. She probably wasn't at all averse to being taken by him, but he, Karamazov, was a terribly awkward man who did not know how to behave with such interesting women. He had to be more decisive and persistent, and everything would be fine. He took her by the hand and asked: "Will you permit me to speak my mind?"

"Please!" Aglaia replied, without taking her eyes off his face. "What are you thinking of telling me?"

Dmytri came up to the window. Outside in the apricot orchard the landlady was shouting something and a fly was buzzing over one of the vases. A pigeon settled on the left shutter and babbled off its tender "consort."

"Well, I'm listening," Aglaia said. "What do you want to say?"

"You see," Karamazov began awkwardly and blushed. "I terribly want . . . to have you."

Aglaia whistled. God Almighty, how could she not whistle when Dmytri was so endlessly naive. What did he mean by "have"? He didn't think that she would rush into his arms? No, this wasn't very serious at all! If anyone else had said this, she would have known how to react. However she advised him to drop his "Karamazovism"<sup>17</sup> and to respect both her and himself.

"Do you understand me?" she said in finishing. "Well, speak up, Dimi!"

He said nothing in reply and looked in silence at some point in space. He felt very uncomfortable. Several seconds passed. But suddenly he burst into loud and quite natural guffaws.

"Know what?" he announced. "Allow me to kiss your head."

Aglaia looked at him curiously. Once more she took his face between her palms and said in a gentle, almost motherly voice:

"To kiss my head? You shouldn't do that either."

"I swear to you," Karamazov suddenly exclaimed. "I swear to you that I haven't a trace of bad feeling left towards you."

"I'm very gratified," Aglaia said. "I believe you. *Dante avait bien raison de dire que l'Enfer est pavé de bonnes résolutions*. But I will allow you to do kiss me only after what I'm thinking about now happens . . ."

"What are you thinking about now?"

"Dimi, there's no need to be so naive, otherwise I'll become quite disillusioned with you. At the moment you're very similar to your pal Vovchik."

Aglaia walked up to the pitcher of apricot water and took a few gulps from it. She seemed somewhat chimerical now, and Karamazov sensed something exceptionally dear about her. It seemed to him that he had once lost her somewhere and that now she had returned to him, more desirable than anyone or anything.

Karamazov gazed into her eyes, watched her every movement, and it seemed to him that he had seen these eyes and these movements either in a dream or somewhere in reality. But if it had been in reality, then this had happened a thousand years ago. It even occurred to him that he, Karamazov, had once lived in another body well before Dante, whom Aglaia had mentioned just now.

"Why are our friends taking so long at the dentist's?" the girl suddenly said. "What do you think, Dimi?"

"Obviously he's having his tooth extracted." Karamazov pulled out his cigarette case and lit up a new cigarette. A group of children raced past the windows shouting and disappeared around the corner. The pigeon babbled away again.

A bell was struck at the distant rest home: they were probably summoning everyone to the second breakfast. The white paw of the Southern sun had crawled up higher and spread out.

It became even more oppressive in the room. "Well, Dmytriý," Aglaia said, "you should head off home. I'm thinking of putting on my bathing suit now." Karamazov grabbed his hat and wordlessly made for the door.

"I suppose we'll meet this evening, yes?" Aglaia said behind him.

Dmytriý turned around. She was standing with her hands behind her head and looked at him enigmatically.

"Definitely!" he said and left the room.

"Something has begun," he suddenly thought. Not the affair which he had wanted as an escape from the boring habitude of boring Hanna—something alarming had begun and—now he was sure of it—something tragic. But it did not provoke horror within him, only a feeling of an insane joy, as if shortly he had to open a completely new and exceptionally interesting page in his monotonous existence.

Karamazov went down to the river. He wanted to dive into the water now and swim against the current, the devil knows where—cleaving the mirror-smooth surface with his strong and decisive movements.

## IX

He had never waited for the evening as on that oppressive day. And any completely normal person cannot imagine how he suffered when Aglaia did not appear.

Moreover she did not come on the second or the third day—on Friday. Meeting with Auntie Klava near the apartment of the Flaubertian ladies, Comrade Vovchyk asked the following decisive question:

"Tell me this: why is your niece in hiding? She hasn't quarreled with Dmytriý, has she?"

"I don't think so," said Auntie Klava. "My niece is a very intelligent person and wouldn't create a tragedy out of some bit of mischief."

"Well then why is she sitting at home? Or maybe she's taken ill too?"

Auntie Klava smiled and said nothing. She came up to an acacia, broke off a pod and, making a children's whistle out of it, took it into her bright-red lips. Comrade Vovchyk raised his white eyebrows and said with indignation:

"First, I don't understand why you're remaining silent and second, there's no place for mystery here. Why not tell me frankly?"

"First of all," Auntie Klava was outraged in turn, "I don't know what to tell you frankly, and I'm not your wife, so don't yell at me like that! Or perhaps you want me to call Yevheniy Valentynovych?"

The linguist suddenly turned pale. He didn't at all expect such a unexpected turn in the conversation and became frightened, as should have been expected.

"Please forgive me," he said. "You . . . you misunderstood me."

But Auntie Klava had already calmed down. She could not remain angry for long with "her little crank." She was only amazed by men: no sooner had they kissed this or that woman two or three times than they began to consider her their property and began to scream at them terribly. Well, all right, she had allowed Comrade Vovchyk a few liberties . . . but had that been enough for him? Auntie Klava never expected the linguist to disappoint her so quickly.

"Be thankful for my character!" she said and offered her hand to be kissed.

The linguist's face flushed crimson. He thanked her a million times and assured her that he would never again even think of yelling at Auntie Klava. He hadn't shouted on purpose, oh no, and had been provoked by none other than Karamazov. In the last three days this eccentric had changed noticeably. He seemed to grow haggard and his eyes glistened with a definite morbid gleam. When Vovchyk had asked his friend what was the matter with him, he had admitted frankly that he had fallen in love with Aglaia, and fallen in love in some special way. In short, "something had begun." Vovchyk tried to placate him as best he could, but how did you soothe an insane person?

He had reassured him in this respect: how could some thoughtless flirtation with a chance woman turn unexpectedly into a serious drama in such a short time? Of course Aglaia was an interesting girl. Of course Karamazov was an unstable character, but all the same this was too much. Only some exceptional process in an obviously sick psyche could wear out a person like that.

"Is that exactly what you told him?" Auntie Klava asked.

"What else could I say? I just don't have the gift for such a thankless role."

"If you haven't," the woman said indignantly, "then you shouldn't take it upon yourself. Who told you this was a thoughtless flirtation? Why do you speak for Dmytri . . .? Or perhaps you've hired yourself out as Hanna's lawyer? If so, then you can leave."

Oh, my God! Vovchyk just wasn't having any luck. He seemed to be saying all the wrong things. He had no luck with women especially. The linguist grabbed Auntie Klava's hand and looking about (in case Yevheniy Valentynovych might see), kissed this hand five, ten, twenty times. Then Auntie Klava threw the green whistle out and suggested he go to Aglaia

and talk with her too. In effect, this was no business of hers, but her niece's, and so he had to talk with her niece. Auntie Klava would go inside now and call Aglaia. Comrade Vovchyk had to head into the apricot orchard and lie in the hammock there. If he didn't want to come across her husband then he had to climb over the fence, for Yevheniy Valentynovych was working near the window and so one couldn't pass by unseen.

"Then I'd better climb over the fence," the linguist agreed right away and calling his retriever, walked away from the gate.

It was a beautiful Southern evening. And the same irresponsible accordions, introduced here from Russia, were hailing one another today, just like every other day. In every corner of the town, girls were singing songs without any arrangement, unusual folk songs.

Silver stars pierced the azure sky and a tender light breeze hopped like a baby hare from the river. By the time Comrade Vovchyk had thrown his setter over the fence and made his way towards the hammock, Aglaia was already sitting there.

"Well, so what did you want to tell me?" she greeted him with a question.

"Actually, I hadn't intended to say anything," the linguist began timidly, sitting down on the grass. "Auntie Klava told me to seek your advice about Dmytriy."

"I'm all ears."

Comrade Vovchyk stalled. Really, what would he tell Aglaia? Maybe he would say something inopportune to her too—and then there would be a fresh annoyance. However he couldn't remain silent either; if Dmytriy continued to pull such stunts then the hunting could be written off! And faltering, the linguist began to talk. And he finished with the point that Aglaia had to see Karamazov.

"You think so?" the girl asked and looked seriously at her interlocutor.

"To be honest, I don't think anything. But it seems to me that Dmytriy has taken ill and you can help him . . . at least by seeing him."

"In your opinion he's not in love with me, simply taken ill?"

"I don't understand anything in these matters," Comrade Vovchyk replied nervously. "But I guess so."

"But I think differently," Aglaia said self-confidently. "I think he's both fallen in love and taken ill. But he's taken ill because of the very fact that he's fallen in love with me. If you like, I can prove it to you tomorrow. I'll meet him tomorrow—and there will be no illness. Do you believe me?"

"There's no need to prove anything to me," the linguist retorted nervously, "because I won't believe you all the same."

Aglaia froze in a question mark in the hammock: she had not expected such boldness from Comrade Vovchyk.

"Why won't you believe me?" she asked.

"Because I've known Karamazov for some time. You may soothe him, but this will, after all, be only a palliative."

"Why, has he had such attacks before?"

"Of course he has, and regardless of whether he had fallen in love with someone or not."

"So therefore these are attacks of insanity, and I am merely the stimulus?"

"I don't know what these attacks are. But I know that you've fallen into his field of view quite accidentally and at the very moment of a relapse in this idiotic disease."

Aglaia became lost in thought. For a few seconds only a cricket upset the stillness of the apricot-orchard evening.

"All the same this is no explanation. First one must hunt out the reasons for his illness, and only then can one speak of what I can be to him: a palliative or real medicine."

"There's no need to talk of reasons here," Comrade Vovchyk said unhappily. "The reasons are clear: inherited mental disorder."

"Of course there's something of inherited mental disorder here, but merely keeping this in mind is not to understand anything... But I can see everything."

The linguist shrugged his shoulders. Although he had heard from Karamazov that Aglaia was an intelligent girl, he was beginning to have his doubts about that now. How could she understand everything? How could she know Karamazov so well in a few short weeks? Perhaps the provincial intimates had told her about him? Or perhaps Dmytriyy himself had talked about himself? But then this wasn't very serious.

"What do you see?" he asked ironically. "For my part, I refuse to continue to talk in circles."

"First of all," Aglaia said calmly, "I want your word that Dmytriyy will know nothing about our conversation. Second, I can declare right away that I know Karamazov better than you. Because today there are thousands of Karamazovs. Dmytriyy Karamazov, let me inform you, is a character. I noted that from our very first meeting, when I had the opportunity of speaking with him. What kind of character, I've already had the occasion to tell Dmytriyy himself, and now I have only to add a bit more. Do you want to hear me out?"

"Please!" Comrade Vovchyk hastened to reply: Aglaia's calm self-confidence was already forcing him to treat her with a certain amount of respect.

"Well then. We'll take it point by point. How old is Karamazov? Probably thirty-three to thirty-five? Yes...? I knew that much. He is the very person who jumped out of his gray gymnasium shorts and immediately landed in the era of war and revolution. Therefore, first of all, Karamazov is a semi-educated fellow. Next: he's an oppositionary? Right?"



I knew that too. The Karamazovs cannot be non-oppositionaries, for they have accepted the events through the prism of their romantic view of the world. They cannot calm down, because it's imprinted in their line to disturb public opinion."

"Well, you heard that from Dmytriy himself," Comrade Vovchik said remembering the characterization of modern-day Karamazovism as a permanent movement, put forward by Karamazov himself.

"I've heard nothing from him," Aglaia said dryly and continued. "Therefore, we have an undeniably talented semi-educated fellow with a romantic nature. Therefore we have what is commonly known as a sincere person—and one who can be bribed with sincerity and taken advantage of a full hundred percent. Karamazov was fascinated by the scope of the social revolution, by the social ideals emblazoned on its banner. He was prepared to die in the name of these ideals and, to use his way of putting things, he would have been prepared to face a thousand more deaths. But how must Dmytriy Karamazov have felt when, finding himself in the so-called 'socialist' environment, he saw that nothing had emerged from that stage and that very quietly and gradually his Communist Party was being transformed into an ordinary 'gatherer of the Russian land.' It had lowered itself, so to speak, on its own initiative to the interests of the cunning philistine bourgeois class. This was already too much, for in Karamazov's opinion this philistine middle class had always stood and stands as a menacing spectre on the path to world progress and therefore, in his opinion, to real socialism."

"But this seems to have nothing to do with our matter," Comrade Vovchik inserted cautiously.

"You're not afraid that someone will overhear us, are you?" Aglaia declared remonstratively. "I can remain silent then."

"Please continue," the linguist shrugged his shoulders. "Why should I be afraid, when I'm a completely Soviet person and everyone knows this full well. That I don't like politics, well that's quite a different matter."

"You also don't like philosophy, right?"

"It's all the same."

"Well, then I'm continuing, because this is in fact leading to the point. In short, Dmytriy Karamazov and the Dmytriy Karamazovs have come to a conclusion they find terrifying: there is no way out. There is no way to break ties with the party, because this ostensibly is not only a betrayal of the party, but also of those social ideals for which they so romantically went to their deaths; this would be in the end a betrayal of one's own self. But there was no way ties could remain unbroken. In short, they stopped at a kind of idiotic crossroads. And so the Karamazovs have begun to philosophize and seek a way out of this dilemma. But they had no luck here either, for they sought cosmetic *perpetuum mobiles*: a situation where both the sheep remain untouched and the wolves feel no hunger. To make a long

story short, these semi-educated fellows became completely confused and thus reached a spiritual crisis. These Karamazovs forgot that they were Karamazenvos, that they lacked a good shepherd. Often intelligent and talented, they were unable to become the formulators and founders of new ideologies, for they lacked broad individual initiative and even the proper terms to create the program of their new outlook. These are zealous Dietzgenes<sup>18</sup> who are used by Marxes and Engelses, but they aren't the Marxes and Engelses. Owing to his romantic nature and probably the revolution, Karamazov really wants to solve problems of universal significance; however, he solves them in the chaos of his ideological crisis, in the chaos of his abortive concept of the world, and so he must logically come to the smashed trough."

"Still, I don't understand why you're saying all this?" Comrade Vovchyk interposed again.

"It will become clear presently," Aglaia said and lit up a fresh cigarette.

"So, I was speaking of Karamazov as a certain character in our time. Dmytriy is one of these too. But as usual, there are no rules without exceptions, and not all the Karamazovs will arrive at the madhouse. Dmytriy accidentally found himself a safety valve in the secondary, in his opinion, idea of the rebirth of his young nation, and this safety valve may save him. He only needs a good shepherd, and he has sensed such a shepherd in me. I haven't spoken much with him on the subject, but the very fact that from our first meeting I began to support his enthusiasm for these new ideals, actively and quite sincerely—this fact alone could not but leave a deep impression on his sensitive soul, and he thus fell in love with me. As with a new shepherd. He fell in love as only an irrepressible romantic can. I've already verified that with three days of separation. Therefore the old illness is not present, there is a new one; but this illness is one of final recovery."

"Have you finished?" Comrade Vovchyk heaved a sigh of relief.

"Yes."

"All the same, I'll say that you philosophize a lot and resemble Dmytriy in some respects."

"How is that?" Aglaia smiled.

"Well, even the mere fact that you speak of love much too simply, as if the talk was about some purchase or sale. It's all so excogitated, so mercantile..."

"And you thought you were dealing with a moneyed lady? No, my friend, in our era one can love with true love only if this love is warmed by the flames of social ideals."

"Then I find it literally incomprehensible how a Muscovite like you can become some kind of shepherd."

"Why not assume that I find it oppressive in my homeland?" Aglaia

smiled enigmatically. "In such instances one can even become a Kirghiz... if there's a safety valve in Kirghizia."

Comrade Vovchyk suddenly yawned and, throwing his arms out, lay back on the grass.

"All the same, speaking honestly," he said, "I've understood nothing of your talk. Seems all very confusing, almost like Dmytri's talk. Politics, politics and politics, and the absence of any clarity whatsoever... You aren't a Communist, by any chance?"

Aglaia laughed. All the same, by Jove, she liked Vovchyk: next to his unequaled naivete, such subtle sarcasm. Had she belonged to the Communist Party she would certainly not have been gladdened by such a remark. Now she understood Karamazov and understood why he didn't want to put an end to his CP(B)U.<sup>19</sup>

"Please, don't ascribe things to me which I never even intended to say," the linguist said in an alarmed voice.

"You retract your words?" Aglaia smiled. "Then I ask your forgiveness; it seemed to me for some reason that you were much more daring than you in fact are."

Comrade Vovchyk yawned again. He whistled to his retriever and said:

"Well, all right. Let's consider the conversation finished. Now a question: will you come out to see Dmytri today?"

"You really want me to come out?"

"Of course."

"Why does it matter so much to you?"

"Because if Dmytri continues with this mood, our hunting will come to nought... And then, I'm fed up with these whims."

"In other words, you definitely want me to come?"

"Of course."

"Well, then I definitely won't come."

"Then I won't even want to talk to you," Comrade Vovchyk was indignant. "And in fact, I quite regret having wasted so much time."

Aglaia burst into guffaws. Ah, how funny he was, this Vovchyk! He regretted "having wasted so much time"! Wasn't his whole life an empty place in the world's movement? Where had he gotten this thing about being given the right to "waste or not to waste time"?

"Now, don't be mad at me, my friend. I'm only joking," she said.

But Vovchyk wasn't offended even without the apology; he had heard enough such compliments from that very Dmytri. They didn't concern him at all. He was merely amazed why the "shepherd" (he said this with irony) did not wish to go to his sheep... In short, goodbye!

Vovchyk got up and was already making his way to the fence. Then Auntie Klava jumped out from behind the shed and took him by the arm. She assured the linguist that she had no intentions of overhearing the

conversation, but she insisted on two demands: the first—that Vovchyk give his honest word that Dmytriy would not find out what Aglaia thought about him (“you see, though on the one hand my niece is a highly civilized person, on the other she can be very incautious and open to extreme foolishness”).

“I’ve already given my word to Aglaia,” the linguist said, displeased.

“And the second,” Auntie Klava continued, “is that I beg you to kiss me secretly in this little right ear and come with me to Yevheniy Valentynovych. There’s nothing for you to worry about now; Zhenia already knows that you are sitting with Aglaia and wants to play chess with you.”

Vovchyk had no desire to play chess at the moment—he was to join Dmytriy; but he could not refuse, for Auntie Klava would have her way all the same and he would have to play chess anyway. He turned towards the hammock and suddenly saw Aglaia in it. She lay there in an indistinct silhouette. “What is this strange girl thinking?” it occurred to him. He had no intention of pondering the question, however, besides it had occurred quite by chance.

As might have been expected, Auntie Klava first organized a trip with him into the depths of the apricot orchard and there, under the lush elderberry, she pressed him to her breasts. And only after everything had been done did she slip her arm through his and, reeling a little with pleasure, go off with him to join Yevheniy Valentynovych.

“Oh, the Bayadere . . . !” she hummed as they approached the door.

At the door they were met by the man with the gold pince-nez, who stretched out both his hands towards Vovchyk:

“Ah . . . I’m very glad!” he said and made way for the slightly bewildered linguist . . .

## NOTES

1. A small river flowing through Kharkiv which, at that time, was the capital of Soviet Ukraine.

2. A story by Leonid Andreev.

3. A small town in Poltava province.

4. Oleksander Potebnia (1835-91), a famous Ukrainian linguist.

5. The Ukrainian language has two forms for “you”: the familiar form *ty* (“thou”) and the less familiar *vy* (“you”). Both forms are rendered as “you” in this translation. Here Aglaia has used the familiar form of “you” (“ty”) with Dmytriy instead of the expected and socially correct “vy.”

6. Jacques Jasmin (1798-1864), a Provençal poet.

7. Theodore Aubanel (1829-85), a Provençal poet.

8. Taras Shevchenko’s first collection of poems was *Kobzar* (The Minstrel).

9. Shevchenko's long poems "Catherine" (1838) and "The Haidamaks" (1841).
10. The opposite of Gogol's famous saying "It is tedious to live in this world, gentlemen."
11. Here Dmytriy uses the *ty* form of "you" again.
12. The real name of Maxim Gorky.
13. Sofia Perovska (1853-81), Russian revolutionary, executed for participation in the assassination of tsar Alexander II.
14. Prince Sergei Volkonsky (1788-1865), a member of the Decembrist movement opposing the tsar.
15. Ivan Mazepa (1639-1709), hetman of Ukraine, ally of King Charles XII of Sweden in the war against Russia.
16. Chandzolin, a Chinese general.
17. Here Dmytriy is accused of imitating Dostoevsky's Fyodor Karamazov.
18. Joseph Dietzgen, a German revolutionary, friend of Karl Marx.
19. Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine.

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Edited by George Luckyj  
Translated by Yuri Tkacz

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**Ardis, Ann Arbor**

## Contents

Editor's Introduction	7
<i>Mykola Khvylovy</i> The Woodcocks (excerpt)	15
<i>Hryhoriy Epik</i> The Radio Ham	69
<i>Geo Shkurnupiy</i> The Provocateur	101
<i>Arkadiy Liubchenko</i> Kostryha	111
<i>Yuriy Yanovsky</i> The Sailor (excerpt)	117
<i>Volodymyr Gzhytsky</i> Black Lake (excerpt)	125
<i>Valerian Pidmohyl'ny</i> In the Infirmary	131
<i>Oleksa Slisarenko</i> Stone Grapes	151
<i>Hryhoriy Kosynka</i> Politics	159
<i>Ivan Senchenko</i> Notes of a Flunky	171
<i>Mike Yohansen</i> The Journey of the Learned Doctor Leonardo and His Future Mistress, the Beautiful Alceste, into Slobodian Switzerland (excerpt)	179
<i>Viktor Domontovych</i> Doctor Seraficus (excerpt)	187
<i>Oles Dosvitny</i> Sirko	193
<i>Mykhailo Ivchenko</i> Along the Broken Road	207
<i>Yukhym Vukhnal</i> The Life and Deeds of Fedko Huska	221
<i>Ostap Vyshnia</i> My Autobiography	233
<i>Borys Antonenko-Davydovych</i> Shadows of Forgotten Days	247
Notes on the Authors	265