A Hero of Our Time

A Psychological Portrait of a Byronic Anti-Hero in the Russian Frontier

by Mikhail Iurevich Lermontov

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A Hero of Our Time

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Published by Library of Alexandria

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Preface
Message to the Reader

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Introduction

A HERO OF OUR TIME is a novel about a man who has everything it takes to be admired and no idea what to do with any of it. Grigori Aleksandrovich Pechorin is a young Russian officer, clever, brave, handsome and well off, posted to the wild mountain frontier of the Caucasus. People who meet him cannot quite decide whether he is charming or dangerous. The book never settles the matter for them, and it does not settle it for the reader either.

When it appeared in 1840, it gave Russian literature one of its first great portraits of a restless, bored, self-watching man, the kind of figure later novelists would return to again and again. It is also a book built in an unusual way: five pieces, told by different people, that circle one character from the outside and then let him speak for himself.

A Young Poet's Only Novel

Mikhail Iurevich Lermontov was born in Moscow in 1814 and became, after Pushkin, the most admired Russian poet of his generation. He was also a soldier. Lermontov was raised by his grandmother, Elizaveta Arsenyeva, on her estate at Tarkhany in the province of Penza, and she watched over his education with fierce devotion. He studied at a boarding school for the nobility in Moscow and later entered the Guards cadet school in St. Petersburg, where he trained as a cavalry officer. He wrote a poem on the death of Pushkin in 1837 that angered the authorities, and he was sent to serve in the Caucasus.

The poem, "Death of the Poet," circulated in handwritten copies across the capital, and it made him famous almost overnight. His first exile to the Caucasus was brief, and he was allowed to return to St. Petersburg in 1838. He knew the mountains, the forts and the spa towns he describes, and the landscape in the book comes from direct experience. He had seen the region as a child, taken there on visits to relatives by his grandmother. As a soldier he later served in a campaign against Chechen fighters, and he drew and painted the landscapes he rode through.

A Hero of Our Time was his only completed novel. He wrote it in his mid-twenties, and it was published in 1840. He was killed in a duel in 1841, at the age of twenty-six, so the book stands as the work of a very young writer who already sounds sure of himself. A second exile followed a duel in 1840, and it sent him back to the Caucasus, where he fought in the Battle of the Valerik. He died near the spa town of Pyatigorsk, a setting that appears in the novel.

The Caucasus was then a place of ongoing war, where the Russian empire was pushing into mountain territory. For educated Russians it was both a frontier of danger and a land of romance, full of fierce horsemen, spectacular peaks and unfamiliar customs. Lermontov uses that glamour and also sees through it. The novel has the speed of an adventure story, but its real subject is a mind.

Readers meet a good deal of the book's later fame secondhand. Its cool, ironic, self-examining hero shaped how fiction thought about disillusioned young men, and the book's brisk, clear prose is still easy to enjoy. The author's own preface insists that Pechorin is a portrait, not a model to follow. The question of what, exactly, a portrait of an age is meant to show gives the title its edge.

Travelers on a Mountain Road

The story begins with an unnamed traveler crossing the Caucasus by post cart, heading north from Tiflis in autumn. On the road

he falls in with an older army man, a staff captain who has served on the frontier for years. The captain, as it happens, once knew a young officer named Pechorin, and the question is what he will make of that memory when the night turns stormy and there is time to talk.

The tone is that of a travel sketch at first: conversational, observant, a little wry. The scenery is gorgeous, and the humor is dry. The pace is easy, with long talk by the fire, and then it quickens as the stories begin. The book holds a long first piece, a brief second one, a short foreword and then the journal entries, and the hero's own pages run from May to late June. Two are told by outsiders, and the rest come from Pechorin's own journal, with a short foreword explaining how that journal came to hand.

Some Russian terms and place names appear, such as versts, Circassians and Ossetes, but the narrator explains what matters as he goes, and no preparation is needed.

Pechorin Under Two Lights

The most interesting thing to watch is how the same man looks when seen by someone who likes him and by someone who does not. What will a plain-spoken old soldier, loyal and puzzled, make of a person he cannot read? And what will Pechorin make of himself when no one is watching? The form helps. The book moves between a traveler's notes, an old soldier's spoken tale and a private journal, so the voice keeps shifting from chatty to guarded to searching. The pace is brisk. Chapters are short, many of the journal entries carry a date, and the prose is clean and quick, with landscape painted in a few strokes before the talk resumes.

Another question is who is really telling each story, and what each teller wants. A traveler who keeps notes hopes for an anecdote, and the captain wants an audience. Does the storyteller shape the man he describes? Lermontov's tone mixes romantic scenery with cool irony. Pechorin's journal is candid,

sharp and often funny, and its observations about people come as close to confession as anything in the book.

Finally, there is the title. Lermontov's preface plays with the phrase, and it is worth wondering whether it is praise, accusation or something stranger, and what sort of age needs a hero like this.

Book 1

Bela

The Heart of a Russian

Chapter 1

I WAS TRAVELING BY POST from Tiflis.

All the luggage in my cart consisted of one small portmanteau, half filled with travel notes on Georgia. Most of them have been lost, fortunately for you; but the portmanteau itself and the rest of its contents have survived, fortunately for me.

As I entered the Koishaur Valley, the sun was disappearing behind the snow-covered mountain ridge. To reach the summit of Mount Koishaur by nightfall, my driver, an Ossete, urged on the horses without stopping, singing loudly and enthusiastically all the while.

What a glorious place that valley is! On every side are inaccessible mountains, steep yellow slopes scored by watercourses, and reddish rocks draped in green ivy and crowned with clusters of plane trees. Far above, the snow has a golden fringe. Below, the Aragva River rolls out of the gorge's dark, misty depths with a roar, clasping an unnamed stream in its embrace, then stretches away like a thread of silver, its waters glinting like a snake with flashing scales.

When we reached the foot of Mount Koishaur, we stopped at a dukhan. About twenty Georgians and mountaineers were gathered there in a noisy crowd, and nearby a caravan of camels had stopped for the night. I had to hire oxen to pull my cart up that accursed mountain, since it was autumn now and the roads were slippery with ice. Besides, the mountain is about two versts long.

There was no help for it, so I hired six oxen and a few Ossetes. One of them hoisted my portmanteau onto his shoulder, while the rest, shouting almost in unison, set about helping the oxen.

Another cart followed mine. I was surprised to see it pulled with ease by four oxen, although it was loaded to the top. Its owner walked behind it, smoking a small Kabardian pipe mounted in silver. He wore a shaggy Circassian cap and an officer's overcoat without epaulettes, and seemed to be about fifty. His dark complexion showed that his face had long been exposed to the Transcaucasian sun, while his prematurely gray mustache seemed at odds with his firm stride and robust appearance. I approached and greeted him. He silently returned my greeting and exhaled a huge cloud of smoke.

"It seems we're fellow travelers."

Again, he bowed silently.

"I suppose you're going to Stavropol?"

"Yes, sir, exactly—with government property."

"Can you tell me how it is that your heavily loaded cart is being pulled without difficulty by four oxen, while six can barely move mine, even though it's empty and all those Ossetes are helping?"

He smiled slyly and gave me a knowing look.

"I'd say you haven't been in the Caucasus long?"

"About a year," I answered.

He smiled again.

"Well?"

"Exactly, sir," he answered. "These Asiatics are terrible beasts! Do you think all that shouting means they're helping the oxen? Why, only the devil can make out what they're shouting. The oxen understand, though; you could yoke twenty of them, and they still wouldn't budge as long as the Ossetes kept shouting in that way of theirs.... Awful scoundrels! But what can you expect from them? They love to extort money from people traveling through here. Those rogues have been spoiled! Just wait and see:

they'll get a tip from you on top of their pay. I know them from way back; they can't fool me!"

"Have you been serving here a long time?"

"Yes, I served here under Aleksei Petrovich," he answered, assuming a dignified air. "I was a second lieutenant when he arrived at the Line, and I was promoted twice during his command for actions against the mountaineers."

"And now—?"

"Now I'm in the Line's third battalion. And you?"

I told him.

That ended the conversation, and we walked on side by side in silence. At the summit of the mountain, we found snow. The sun set, and—as usually happens in the south—night followed day without any twilight. Thanks to the snow's glow, however, we could easily make out the road, which still climbed the mountainside, though not as steeply as before. I told the Ossetes to put my portmanteau in the cart and replace the oxen with horses. Then I looked down at the valley one last time, but thick mist, billowing out of the gorges, had completely hidden it, and not a sound rose to our ears from below. The Ossetes crowded around me, clamoring for tips, but the staff captain shouted at them so threateningly that they scattered at once.

"What a people!" he said. "They don't even know the Russian word for 'bread,' but they've learned the phrase 'Officer, give us a tip!' In my opinion, even the Tartars are better; at least they're not drunkards."...

We were now within about a verst of the station. Everything around us was still—so still, in fact, that we could follow a gnat's flight by the buzz of its wings. To our left loomed a deep, black gorge. Beyond it and in front of us rose the mountains' dark blue summits, furrowed with ravines and layered with snow, sharply outlined against the pale horizon, which still held the evening's last glow. Stars appeared in the dark sky, and in some strange way

they seemed much higher than in our own northern country. Bare black rocks jutted out on both sides of the road. Here and there, shrubs poked out from under the snow, but not a single withered leaf stirred. In nature's deathlike sleep, it was heartening to hear the three tired post horses snorting and the Russian bell tinkling irregularly.

"We'll have glorious weather tomorrow," I said.

The staff captain said nothing, but pointed at a lofty mountain directly opposite us.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Mount Gut."

"Well, what about it?"

"Can't you see it's smoking?"

Sure enough, smoke was rising from Mount Gut. Thin streams of cloud crept along its slopes, and a cloud so densely black rested on its summit that it looked like a blot against the dark sky.

By then we could make out the post station and the roofs of the huts around it; welcoming lights twinkled ahead of us when a damp, chilly wind suddenly rose, the gorge rumbled, and drizzling rain began to fall. I barely had time to wrap my felt cloak around myself before the snow came down. I looked at the staff captain with deep respect.

"We'll have to spend the night here," he said in an irritated tone. "There's no crossing the mountains in a blizzard like this. —I say, have there been any avalanches on Mount Krestov?" he asked the driver.

"No, sir," the Ossete answered, "but there are a great many threatening to fall—a great many."

Since the station had no travelers' room, we were given a night's lodging in a smoky hut. I invited my fellow traveler to have a glass of tea with me, since I had brought my cast-iron teapot, my only comfort on my travels in the Caucasus.

One side of the hut was built against the cliff, and three wet, slippery steps led up to the door. I felt my way inside and bumped into a cow (these people use the cowshed as a servants' room). I didn't know which way to turn—sheep were bleating on one side and a dog was growling on the other. Fortunately, I noticed a faint glimmer of light off to one side, and by its help I found another doorway. There I saw a scene that was far from uninteresting. The broad hut, whose roof rested on two smoke-blackened pillars, was crowded with people. A small fire crackled in the middle of the floor, and smoke, blown back by the wind from an opening in the roof, spread around in such a thick cloud that for a long time I couldn't see anything. Two old women, several children, and a lanky Georgian sat by the fire, all of them in rags. There was nothing else to do. We took refuge by the fire and lit our pipes; soon the teapot was singing invitingly.

"What a wretched lot!" I said to the staff-captain, indicating our dirty hosts, who stared at us silently, as if dazed.

"And utterly stupid, too!" he replied. "Would you believe it? They're completely ignorant and incapable of the slightest civilization! Even our Kabardians or Chechens, robbers and ragamuffins though they are, are real daredevils. These others, though, have no taste for weapons, and you'll never see a decent dagger on one of them! Nothing but Ossetes!"

"Have you spent a long time in Chechen country?"

"Yes, I was stationed there with my company for about ten years, in a fortress near Kamennyi Brod. Do you know the place?"

"I've heard of it."

"I can tell you, my boy, we'd had more than enough of those daredevil Chechens. Thank goodness, things are quieter now; but in the old days, if you went even a hundred paces beyond the rampart, you'd be sure to find a shaggy devil lying in wait for you. You only had to let your mind wander, and at

any moment you might have a lasso around your neck or a bullet in the back of your head! Brave fellows, though!"...

"You must have had plenty of adventures, I imagine?" I said, my curiosity aroused.

"Of course! Plenty."...

At that, he tugged at his left mustache, lowered his head to his chest, and fell silent in thought. I was eager to draw some little anecdote out of him—a natural desire for anyone who travels and keeps notes.

Meanwhile, the tea was ready. I took two travel tumblers from my portmanteau, filled one, and set it in front of the staff-captain. He sipped his tea and said, as if to himself, "Yes, plenty!" That exclamation gave me great hope. I know old Caucasian officers love to talk and tell stories, but rarely get the chance. They may spend five years or so stationed with their company in some remote place, and the whole time they won't hear a soul say "good morning" (because the sergeant says "good health"). And, indeed, they have good reason to be talkative—with a wild and fascinating people all around them, danger to face every day, and so many extraordinary things happening. It's in circumstances like these that we can't help regretting that so few of our countrymen keep notes.

"Would you like some rum in your tea?" I said to my companion. "I have some white rum with me—from Tiflis—and it's cold now."

"No, thank you, sir; I don't drink."

"Really?"

"That's right. I've sworn off drinking. Once, when I was a second lieutenant, some of us had a bit too much. That very night there was an alarm, and we went out to the front half drunk! We certainly paid for it when Aleksei Petrovich heard about us! God help us, he was furious! He came this close to having us court-martialed. That's how it goes! You might go

a whole year without seeing a soul, but just have a drink and you're done for!"

At this, I almost gave up hope.

"Take the Circassians, for instance," he went on. "Let them drink their fill of buza at a wedding or a funeral, and their knives come out. Once, I had a hard time getting away with a whole skin—and this happened at the house of a 'friendly' 7 prince, where I was a guest."

"What happened?" I asked.

"Here, I'll tell you."...

He filled his pipe, drew in the smoke, and began his story.

Chapter 2

"YOU SEE, sir," said the staff-captain, "I was stationed with a company in a fortress beyond the Terek at the time—nearly five years ago now. One autumn day, a supply convoy arrived, under the command of an officer, a young man of about twenty-five. He reported to me in full uniform and announced that he'd been ordered to stay in the fortress with me. He was so elegant, with such a fair complexion and such a brand-new uniform, that I immediately guessed he hadn't been in the Caucasian army for long.

"'I suppose you've been transferred from Russia?' I asked.

"'That's right, captain,' he answered.

"I took him by the hand and said:

"'I'm delighted to see you—delighted! It may be a little dull for you... but we'll live together like a couple of friends. And please, just call me "Maksim Maksimych." And tell me, what are you wearing your full uniform for? Just wear your forage cap whenever you come to see me!'

"They assigned him quarters, and he settled into the fortress."

"What was his name?" I asked Maksim Maksimych.

"His name was Grigori Aleksandrovich Pechorin. He was a splendid fellow, I can assure you, though a little peculiar. For instance, one time he'd spend the whole day hunting in the rain and cold; everyone else would be frozen and exhausted, but he wouldn't feel the cold or the fatigue. Then, another time, he'd be sitting in his room and, if there was the slightest breeze, he'd say he'd caught a chill; if the shutters rattled against the window, he'd

start and turn pale. Yet I've seen him attack a boar single-handed. Often you couldn't get a word out of him for hours; but then, at other times, once he got started telling stories, you'd split your sides laughing. Yes, sir, a very eccentric man; and he must have been wealthy, too. What a lot of expensive trinkets he owned!"...

"Did he stay there with you long?" I continued.

"Yes, about a year. And for that very reason, it was a memorable year for me. He gave me a great deal of trouble—but there, let bygones be bygones!... You see, it's true: some people are born destined to have all sorts of strange things happen to them!"

"Strange?" I exclaimed, looking curious as I poured some tea.

Chapter 3

"WELL, then, I'll tell you," said Maksim Maksimych. "About six versts from the fortress lived a certain 'friendly' prince. His son, a brat of about fifteen, was used to riding over to visit us. Not a day went by without him coming, now for one thing, now for another. And, really, Grigori Aleksandrovich and I spoiled him. What a daredevil the boy was! He'd try anything, snatching up a cap at full gallop or knocking things down with his gun! He had one bad quality: he was terribly greedy for money. Once, just for fun, Grigori Aleksandrovich promised to give him a ducat if he stole the best he-goat from his father's herd for him. And what do you think? The very next night he came dragging it in by the horns! Sometimes we'd take it into our heads to tease him, and then his eyes would turn bloodshot and his hand would fly straight to his dagger.

"'You'll get yourself killed if you're not careful, Azamat,' I'd say to him. 'That hot temper of yours will get you into trouble.'

"Once, the old prince himself came to invite us to the wedding of his eldest daughter; and since we were his guest-friends, it was impossible to refuse, though he was a Tartar. We set off. As we entered the village, a number of dogs met us, barking loudly. The women hid when they saw us coming, but those whose faces we managed to catch a glimpse of were far from beautiful.

"'I had a much better opinion of Circassian women,' remarked Grigori Aleksandrovich.

"'Wait a moment!' I replied with a smile. I had my own ideas about that.

"A number of people had already gathered at the prince's hut. You know, it's the custom among the people of Asia to invite everyone to a wedding. We were welcomed with every mark of respect and shown to the guest room. Even so, I quietly made a note of where our horses were kept, in case anything unexpected happened."

"How do they celebrate weddings?" I asked the staff captain.

"Oh, the usual way. First the mullah reads them something from the Koran; then gifts are given to the bride and groom and all their relatives. Next comes eating and drinking buza, followed by dancing on horseback. There's always some ragamuffin, smeared with grease, riding a wretched, lame mare and making faces, clowning around, and making the honored guests laugh. Finally, when it gets dark, they hold what we'd call a ball in the guest room. A poor old graybeard strums a three-stringed instrument—I forget what they call it, but anyway, it's something like our balalaika. The girls and young children line up in two rows, facing each other, clapping their hands and singing. Then a girl and a man come out to the center and start chanting verses to each other—whatever comes into their heads—and the rest join in as a chorus. Pechorin and I sat in the seats of honor. All at once, our host's youngest daughter, a girl of about sixteen, came up and sang to Pechorin —how should I put it?—something like a compliment."...

"Do you remember what she sang?"

"I think it went like this: 'They say our young horsemen are handsome, and their tunics are trimmed with silver; but more handsome still is the young Russian officer, whose tunic is adorned with gold lace. He stands among them like a poplar, but no such tree will grow or bloom in our gardens!'

"Pechorin stood up, bowed to her, touched his forehead and heart, and asked me to reply for him. I know their language well, so I translated his answer."

"After she left us, I whispered to Grigori Aleksandrovich:

"'Well, what do you think of her?'

"'Charming!' he replied. 'What's her name?'

"'Her name is Bela,' I answered.

"And a beautiful girl she truly was: tall and slender, with eyes as black as a mountain chamois's, and they seemed to look right into your soul. Pechorin kept gazing at her, lost in thought, while she often stole glances at him from beneath her lashes. But Pechorin wasn't the only one admiring the pretty princess. From a corner of the room, another pair of eyes stared at her, fixed and fiery. I took a good look at their owner and recognized my old acquaintance Kazbich, who, you should know, was neither exactly 'friendly' nor exactly the opposite. He was widely suspected, though no one had ever actually caught him doing anything crooked. He used to bring rams to our fortress and sell them cheaply; but he never bargained. Whatever price he named, you had to pay. He'd sooner have his throat cut than lower it. People said he liked roaming beyond the Kuban with the Abreks, and, to tell the truth, he had a real thief's face. He was a short, wiry, broad-shouldered fellow—but clever, I can tell you, clever as the devil! His tunic was always worn and patched, but his weapons were set in silver. His horse was famous throughout Kabardia—and it was truly impossible to imagine a better one! No wonder all the other horsemen envied Kazbich. They had tried more than once to steal the horse, but never succeeded. I can still see the animal before me now—black as coal, with legs like bowstrings and eyes as fine as Bela's! And how strong he was! He could gallop as much as fifty versts without stopping! He was well trained, too: he would trot behind his master like a dog and even knew his voice.

Kazbich never tethered him, either—just the horse for a robber!...

"That evening Kazbich was even more sullen than usual, and I noticed he was wearing a coat of mail under his tunic. 'He's not wearing that coat of mail for nothing,' I thought. 'I'll bet he's planning something!'

"The hut grew oppressively hot, so I went outside to cool off. Night had fallen over the mountains, and mist was beginning to creep through the gorges."

"I thought I'd slip under the shed where our horses were kept and see whether they'd been fed. Besides, it never hurts to take precautions. My horse was a splendid one, too, and more than one Kabardian had already looked at him with admiration, saying, 'Yakshi tkhe chok yakshi.'

"I crept along the fence. Suddenly I heard voices, and immediately recognized one of them."

"It was the voice of Azamat, that young rascal, our host's son. The other person spoke less, and more quietly."

"'What are they talking about over there?' I wondered. 'Surely it can't be my horse!' I crouched beside the fence and listened, trying not to miss a word. Now and then, the songs and the buzz of voices coming from the hut drowned out the conversation, which I found interesting."

"'That's a magnificent horse you have,' Azamat was saying. 'If I had a house of my own and a herd of three hundred mares, I'd give half of it for your galloper, Kazbich!'

"'Aha! Kazbich!' I said to myself, and remembered the coat of mail.

"'Yes,' Kazbich replied after a pause. 'There's no other horse like him in all of Kabardia. Once—I was on the other side of the Terek—I rode with the Abreks to seize Russian herds. We had no luck, so we split up and went in different directions. Four Cossacks raced after me. I could hear the giaours shouting behind me, and a dense forest lay ahead. I crouched low in the

saddle, put my trust in Allah, and, for the first time in my life, struck my horse with the whip. Like a bird, he plunged among the branches; sharp thorns tore my clothes, and dead cork-elm branches struck my face! My horse leaped over tree trunks and smashed through the bushes with his chest! I would have been better off leaving him at the edge of the forest and hiding on foot, but I couldn't bear to part with him—and the Prophet rewarded me. A few bullets whistled over my head. I could hear the Cossacks, who had dismounted, running along my tracks. Suddenly a deep ravine opened before me. My galloper took a moment—and jumped. His hind hooves slipped off the opposite bank, and he was left hanging by his forefeet. I dropped the reins and threw myself into the hollow, saving my horse, who jumped out. The Cossacks saw the whole thing, but not one of them got down to look for me, probably thinking I'd been mortally injured. I heard them racing to catch my horse. My heart ached. I crept through the thick grass along the hollow—then I looked around: I was at the edge of the forest. A few Cossacks were riding out into the clearing, and there was my Karagyoz, galloping straight toward them. With a shout, they all charged after him. They pursued him for a long, long time, and one of them, in particular, came close once or twice to throwing a lasso around his neck.

"I trembled, lowered my eyes, and began to pray. A few moments later I looked up, and there was my Karagyoz flying along, his tail streaming—free as the wind. The giaours, riding their exhausted horses, trailed far behind, one after another, across the steppe. Wallah! It's true—really true! I lay in the hollow until late that night. Suddenly—what do you think, Azamat?—I heard a horse trotting along the bank of the hollow in the dark, snorting, neighing, and stamping his hooves. I recognized Karagyoz's voice; it was he, my comrade!'... Ever since then, we've never been apart!'

"I could hear him patting his galloper's sleek neck and calling him all sorts of affectionate names."

"'If I had a herd of a thousand mares,' Azamat said, 'I'd give them all for your Karagyoz!'

"'Yok! 11 I wouldn't take them!' Kazbich said indifferently.

"'Listen, Kazbich,' Azamat said, trying to win him over. 'You're a kindhearted man, a brave horseman, but my father is afraid of the Russians and won't let me go up into the mountains. Give me your horse, and I'll do anything you want. I'll steal my father's best rifle for you, or his saber—whichever you prefer—and his saber is a real Gurda; 12 you only have to lay its edge against your hand, and it will cut you. A coat of mail like yours is no match for it.'

"Kazbich remained silent.

"'The first time I saw your horse,' Azamat continued, 'when he wheeled and leaped beneath you, nostrils flared and flints flying in showers from under his hooves, something happened inside me that I couldn't understand. Since then, I've grown weary of everything. I've looked down on my father's finest horses. I've been ashamed to be seen riding them, and longing has taken hold of me. In my anguish, I've spent whole days on the cliffs, and every minute my thoughts have turned to your black horse, with his graceful gait and sleek back, straight as an arrow. With his keen, bright eyes, he's looked into mine as if he were about to speak!... I'll die, Kazbich, if you won't sell him to me!' Azamat said, his voice trembling.

"I heard him burst into tears, and I must tell you that Azamat was a very stubborn lad. Nothing could make him cry, even when he was younger.

"In answer to his tears, I heard something like a laugh.

"'Listen,' Azamat said firmly. 'You see, I'm ready to do anything. If you like, I'll steal my sister for you! How she dances! How she sings! And the way she embroiders with gold —marvelous! Not even a Turkish Padishah has had a wife like

her!... Shall I? Wait for me tomorrow night, over there in the gorge where the torrent flows. I'll pass through with her on my way to the neighboring village—and she'll be yours. Surely Bela is worth your horse!'

"Kazbich remained silent for a very long time. At last, instead of answering, he began softly to sing an ancient song:

"Many a beauty dwells among us

From whose dark eyes the starlight wells;

It is sweet and enviable to hold

Their love, but freedom is bolder still.

You can have four wives if you pay the gold;

But a spirited steed is beyond all price;

The whirlwind on the steppe is slower still;

He knows no treachery, no deceit."

"Azamat begged him in vain to agree. He wept, pleaded, and swore. At last, Kazbich cut him off impatiently:

"'Get out, you crazy brat! You think you can ride my horse? You'd be thrown in three steps, and break your neck on the stones!'

"'Me?' Azamat cried furiously, and the child's dagger blade rang against the coat of mail. A powerful arm shoved him away, and he hit the wattle fence so hard that it shook.

"'Now we'll see some fun!' I thought.

"I rushed into the stable, bridled our horses, and led them into the back courtyard. A couple of minutes later, a terrible uproar broke out in the hut. Here's what had happened: Azamat had rushed in with his tunic torn, saying Kazbich was going to kill him. Everyone sprang out, grabbed their guns,

and the fun began! Noise, shouting, gunshots! But by then Kazbich was in the saddle, wheeling through the crowd in the street and defending himself like a madman, swinging his saber.

"'It's a bad idea to get involved in other people's quarrels,' I said to Grigori Aleksandrovich, taking him by the arm. 'Wouldn't it be better to get out of here without wasting time?'

"'Wait and see how it ends!'

"'Oh, it's bound to end badly; it always does with these Asians. Once they get drunk on buza, there's sure to be bloodshed.'

"We mounted and galloped home."

Chapter 4

"TELL ME, what happened to Kazbich?" I asked the staff captain impatiently.

"What do you think would happen to a fellow like that?" he replied, finishing his glass of tea. "He got away, of course."

"And wasn't he wounded?" I asked.

"God only knows! Those scoundrels are hard to kill! I've seen plenty of them in battle, sir, stuck all over with bayonets like a sieve, and still swinging their sabers."

After a pause, the staff captain continued, tapping his foot on the ground:

"There's one thing I'll never forgive myself for. When we got back to the fortress, the devil made me tell Grigori Aleksandrovich everything I'd overheard while eavesdropping behind the fence. He laughed—cunning fellow!—and came up with a little plan of his own."

"What was it? Please, tell me."

"Well, there's no getting out of it now, I suppose. I've started the story, so I have to go on.

"About four days later, Azamat rode over to the fortress. As usual, he went to see Grigori Aleksandrovich, who always gave him sweets. I was there. They were talking about horses, and Pechorin began praising Kazbich's Karagyoz. What a spirited horse he was, and how handsome! A perfect chamois! In fact, from the way Pechorin described him, there wasn't another like him in the whole world!

"The young Tartar's beady eyes began to sparkle, but Pechorin seemed not to notice. I tried to change the subject, but mark my words, Pechorin immediately steered the conversation back to Kazbich's horse. Every time Azamat came, it was the same story. After about three weeks, I noticed that Azamat was growing pale and thin, just as people in novels do when they're in love, sir. And no wonder!...

"Well, I didn't learn the whole trick until later—Grigori Aleksandrovich had teased Azamat so relentlessly that the boy was ready even to drown himself. One day, Pechorin suddenly said:

"'I see, Azamat, that you've taken a desperate fancy to Kazbich's horse. But you'll no more see him than the back of your own neck! Tell me, what would you give if someone gave him to you?'

"'Anything he wanted,' Azamat answered.

"'Then I'll get the horse for you, on one condition... Swear you'll do it?'

"'I swear. You swear too!'

"'All right! I swear the horse will be yours. But in return, you must deliver your sister Bela into my hands. Karagyoz will be my gift to you as her bridegroom. I hope it's a profitable deal for you.'"

"Azamat remained silent.

"'You won't? Well, suit yourself! I thought you were a man, but it seems you're still a child; you're too young to ride a horse!'

"Azamat flared up.

"'But my father—' he said.

"'Does he never go away?'

"'That's true.'

"'So you agree?'

"'I agree,' Azamat whispered, deathly pale. 'But when?'

"'The first time Kazbich rides over here. He's promised to bring ten rams; the rest is up to me. So keep your eyes open, Azamat!'

"And so they settled the matter—a bad business, to tell the truth! I said as much to Pechorin afterward, but all he answered was that a wild Circassian girl ought to consider herself fortunate to have such a charming husband as him—because by their customs, he really was her husband—and that Kazbich was a scoundrel who deserved to be punished. What could I say to that?... At the time, though, I knew nothing about their conspiracy. Well, one day Kazbich rode up and asked whether we needed any rams and honey, so I told him to bring some the next day.

"'Azamat!' said Grigori Aleksandrovich. 'Tomorrow Karagyoz will be in my hands; if Bela isn't here tonight, you'll never see the horse.'..

"'All right,' said Azamat, and galloped to the village.

"That evening Grigori Aleksandrovich armed himself and rode out of the fortress. I don't know how they settled the matter, but they both returned that night, and the sentry saw a woman lying across Azamat's saddle, bound hand and foot, her head wrapped in a veil."

"And the horse?" I asked the staff captain.

"One minute! One minute! Early the next morning, Kazbich rode over, driving ten rams to sell. He tethered his horse by the fence, came in to see me, and I treated him to tea. Though he was a robber, he was still my guest-friend."

"We chatted about this and that... Suddenly I saw Kazbich start, his expression change, and dart to the window. Unfortunately, the window looked out onto the back courtyard."

"'What's the matter with you?' I asked."

"'My horse!... My horse!' he cried, trembling all over."

"In fact, I heard the clatter of hooves."

"'It's probably some Cossack who's ridden up.'"

"'No! Urus—yaman, yaman!' he roared, and rushed out headlong like a wild panther. In two bounds he was in the courtyard. At the fortress gate, the sentry blocked his way with his gun, but Kazbich jumped over it and dashed down the road... Dust swirled in the distance—Azamat was galloping away on the spirited Karagyoz. As he ran, Kazbich pulled his gun from its case and fired. He stood motionless for a moment, making sure he had missed. Then he let out a shrill cry, smashed his gun against a rock, fell to the ground, and burst into tears like a child... People from the fortress gathered around him, but he paid no attention to anyone. They stood talking for a while, then went back. I ordered the money for the rams to be placed beside him. He didn't touch it, but lay face down as if dead. Would you believe it? He stayed like that for the rest of that day and through the following night! Only the next morning did he come to the fortress and demand to know the thief's name. The sentry, who had seen Azamat untie the horse and ride away on him, saw no reason to keep it secret. When Kazbich heard the name Azamat, his eyes flashed, and he set off for the village where Azamat's father lived."

"And what about the father?"

"Ah, that's where the trick came in! Kazbich couldn't find him; he'd gone away for five or six days. Otherwise, how could Azamat have managed to carry off Bela?"

"And when the father returned, neither his daughter nor his son was there. Azamat was a sly rogue! He understood that he'd lose his life if he were caught. So he was never seen again. He probably joined a gang of Abreks and ended his turbulent life on the other side of the Terek or the Kuban. He deserved it!"...

Chapter 5

"I CONFESS, I had plenty of trouble over the whole affair myself. As soon as I learned that the Circassian girl was with Grigori Aleksandrovich, I put on my epaulettes and sword and went to see him.

"He was lying on the bed in the outer room, one hand under his head and the other holding a pipe that had gone out. The door to the inner room was locked, and there was no key in it. I noticed all that at once... I coughed and clicked my heels on the threshold, but he pretended not to hear."

"'Ensign!' I said as sternly as I could. 'Don't you see I've come to see you?'"

"'Ah, good morning, Maksim Maksimych! Would you like a pipe?' he answered without getting up."

"'Excuse me, I'm not Maksim Maksimych. I'm the staff captain.'"

"'It's all the same! Would you like some tea? If only you knew how tortured I am with anxiety.'"

"'I know all about it,' I answered, walking over to the bed."

"'So much the better,' he said. 'I'm not in the mood to tell the story.'"

"'Ensign, you've committed an offense that I may have to answer for as well as you.'"

"'Oh, enough of that. What's the harm? You know, we've shared everything.'"

"'What kind of joke do you think you're playing? Your sword, please!'...

"'Mitka, my sword!'

"Mitka brought the sword. Having discharged my duty, I sat on the bed facing Pechorin and said, 'Listen, Grigori Aleksandrovich, you have to admit this is a bad business.'

"'What is?'

"'Why, you've carried off Bela... Ah, that beast Azamat!... Come on, confess!' I said."

"'But what if I'm fond of her?'...

"Well, what could I say to that?... I was at a loss. After a short silence, I told him that if Bela's father came to claim her, he would have to give her up."

"'Not at all!'

"'But he'll find out she's here.'"

"'How?'

"Again, I was at a loss."

"'Listen, Maksim Maksimych,' Pechorin said, getting to his feet. 'You're a kindhearted man, you know; but if we give that savage back his daughter, he'll cut her throat or sell her. What's done is done, and now the only thing we can do is avoid making matters worse. Leave Bela with me, and keep my sword!'"

"'At least let me see her,' I said."

"'She's behind that door. I wanted to see her myself today, but I couldn't. She sits in the corner, wrapped in her veil, and neither speaks nor looks up—shy as a wild chamois! I've hired the wife of our innkeeper. She knows the Tartar language and will look after Bela and get her used to the idea that she belongs to me—for she'll belong to no one else!' he added, banging his fist on the table."

"I agreed to that too... What could I do? There are some people you simply have to agree with."

"Well?" I asked Maksim Maksimych. "Did he really succeed in getting her used to him, or did she waste away in captivity, homesick?"

"Good gracious! How could she waste away from homesickness? From the fortress, she could see the very same hills she'd seen from the village—and these savages need nothing more. Besides, Grigori Aleksandrovich gave her some kind of present every day. At first she didn't say a word, but haughtily pushed the gifts away, and they then went to the innkeeper's wife, making her eloquent. Ah, presents! What won't a woman do for a piece of colored cloth!... But that's beside the point... Grigori Aleksandrovich kept trying for a long time, and meanwhile he studied the Tartar language, while she began to understand ours. Little by little, she got used to looking at him, at first furtively, from the side. But she still pined and softly sang her songs, so that even I felt heavyhearted when I heard her from the next room. I'll never forget one scene: I was walking by and looked in through the window. Bela was sitting on the stove bench, her head bowed, and Grigori Aleksandrovich stood facing her."

"'Listen, my Peri,' he was saying. 'Surely you know you'll have to be mine sooner or later—so why do you keep tormenting me? Are you in love with some Chechen? If so, I'll let you go home at once.'"

"She gave the slightest start and shook her head."

"'Or is it,' he continued, 'that you find me completely repulsive?'"

"She sighed."

"'Or does your faith forbid you to give me even a little of your love?'"

"She turned pale and said nothing."

"'Believe me, Allah is the same for all peoples; and if he allows me to love you, why should he forbid you to return my love?'"

"She gazed steadily into his face, as if struck by this new idea. Her eyes showed distrust, but also a desire to believe him. What eyes they were! They glittered like two glowing coals."

"'Listen, my dear Bela!' Pechorin continued. 'You see how much I love you. I'm ready to give up everything to make you happy again. I want you to be happy, and if you become sad again, I'll die. Tell me, will you be happier?'

"She fell silent, her black eyes still fixed on him. Then she smiled warmly and nodded in agreement."

"He took her hand and tried to make her kiss him. She resisted weakly, repeating only, 'Please! Please! You mustn't, you mustn't!'"

"He kept insisting; she began to tremble and cry."

"'I'm your captive,' she said, 'your slave; of course you can force me.'"

"And then—more tears."

"Grigori Aleksandrovich struck his forehead with his fist and rushed into the next room. I went in to see him and found him pacing gloomily back and forth, his arms folded."

"'Well, old man?' I said to him."

"'She's a devil, not a woman!' he replied. 'But I give you my word of honor: she will be mine!'"

"I shook my head."

"'Want to bet?' he said. 'In a week?'"

"'All right,' I replied."

"We shook hands on it and went our separate ways."

"The very next day, he sent a courier to Kizlyar to buy some things for him. The messenger came back with an enormous quantity of various Persian fabrics."

"'What do you think, Maksim Maksimych?' he said, showing me the gifts. 'Will our Asian beauty withstand a barrage like this?'"

"'You don't know Circassian women,' I replied. 'They're nothing like Georgian or Transcaucasian Tatar women—not at all! They have their own principles; they're raised differently.'"

"Grigori Aleksandrovich smiled and began whistling a march to himself."

Chapter 6

"AS THINGS TURNED OUT, though," Maksim Maksimych continued, "I was right, you see. The presents had only half the effect. She became more gracious, more trusting—but that was all. So Pechorin decided on one final attempt. One morning he had his horse saddled, dressed as a Circassian, armed himself, and went into her room."

"'Bela,' he said, 'you know how much I love you. I decided to carry you off, thinking that once you got to know me, you would love me. I was wrong. Goodbye! You're free to do whatever you like with everything I own. Go back to your father if you want—you're free. I've wronged you, and I must punish myself. Goodbye! I'm leaving. Where to? How would I know? Perhaps I won't have long to wait for a bullet or a saber thrust. Then remember me, and forgive me.'"

"He turned away and held out his hand to her in farewell. She didn't take it, but remained silent. I was standing behind the door, able to see her face through a crack, and I felt sorry for her—such a deathly pallor covered that charming little face! When she didn't answer, Pechorin took a few steps toward the door. He was trembling, and—shall I tell you?—I think he was ready to do exactly what he'd said, though he'd meant it as a joke! That was the kind of man he was, heaven knows!"

"But he had barely touched the door when Bela sprang to her feet, burst into tears, and threw herself around his neck! Would you believe it? I was standing behind the door and

started crying too—or, well, not exactly crying, but—something foolish!"

The staff captain fell silent.

"Yes, I confess," he said after a while, tugging at his mustache, "I felt hurt that no woman had ever loved me like that."

"Did their happiness last?" I asked.

"Yes. She admitted that from the day she first laid eyes on Pechorin, she had often dreamed of him, and that no other man had ever made such an impression on her. Yes, they were happy!"

"How tiresome!" I exclaimed involuntarily.

In fact, I'd been expecting a tragic ending—and then, there he was, disappointing my hopes in such an unexpected way!...

"Is it possible," I continued, "that her father didn't suspect she was with you in the fortress?"

"Well, you should know, he seems to have suspected something. A few days later, we learned that the old man had been murdered. This is how it happened."...

My attention was aroused again.

"I must tell you that Kazbich thought Azamat had stolen the horse with his father's consent; at least, that's what I suppose. So one day Kazbich went and waited by the roadside, about three versts beyond the village. The old man was returning from one of his fruitless searches for his daughter; his retainers were trailing behind. It was dusk. Lost in thought, he was riding at a walking pace when Kazbich suddenly darted out from behind a bush like a cat, leaped onto the horse behind him, knocked him to the ground with a dagger thrust, seized the reins, and rode off. Some of the retainers saw the whole thing from the hill and galloped after Kazbich, but they couldn't catch him."

"He made up for losing his horse and got his revenge at the same time," I said, hoping to draw out my companion's opinion.

"Of course, from their point of view," the staff captain said, "he was entirely in the right."

I couldn't help being struck by the Russian's ability to adapt to the customs of the people among whom he happens to live. I don't know whether this quality of mind deserves blame or praise, but it proves how remarkably flexible he is and shows that he has a clear common sense that forgives evil whenever it sees that evil is inevitable or impossible to eliminate.

Chapter 7

MEANWHILE, we had finished our tea. The horses, which had been harnessed long before, were freezing in the snow. In the west the moon was fading, just about to sink into the black clouds hanging over the distant peaks like strips of a torn curtain. We left the hut. Contrary to my fellow traveler's prediction, the weather had cleared, and the morning promised to be calm. The stars' dancing choirs were woven into wondrous patterns on the distant horizon; one after another, they flickered out as the pale glow of dawn spread across the dark lilac sky, gradually lighting the steep mountain slopes covered in untouched snow. To the right and left loomed grim, mysterious chasms, while masses of mist, swirling and coiling like snakes, crept along the folds of the neighboring cliffs, as if sentient and fearful of the coming day.

All was calm in heaven and on earth, as calm as a man's heart at morning prayer; only now and then a cool wind swept in from the east, lifting the horses' frost-covered manes. We set off. The five lean nags struggled to drag our wagons along the winding road up Mount Gut. We walked behind them, putting stones under the wheels whenever the horses grew tired. The road seemed to lead into the sky, for as far as the eye could see it kept climbing, until at last it disappeared into the cloud that had been resting on Mount Gut's summit since early evening, like a kite waiting for its prey. Snow crunched under our feet. The air grew so thin that breathing hurt; every so often blood rushed to my head, yet a kind of rapture spread

through my veins, and I felt a sort of joy at being so far above the world. I admit it's a childish feeling, but when we leave the conventions of society and draw close to nature, we involuntarily become children again: every quality we've acquired through experience falls away from the soul, and it becomes once more what it once was and surely will be again. Anyone who, like me, has wandered through desolate mountains, spent long hours observing their fantastic shapes, and greedily gulped down the life-giving air filling their ravines will understand my desire to share, to narrate, to sketch those magical scenes.

At last we reached the summit of Mount Gut and stopped to look around. A gray cloud hung over the mountain, its cold breath threatening a storm; but in the east everything was so clear and golden that we—we meaning the staff captain and I—forgot all about the cloud... Yes, the staff captain too. In simple hearts, the feeling for nature's beauty and grandeur is a hundred times stronger and more vivid than it is in us, the ecstatic composers of tales in words and on paper.

"You must be used to these magnificent sights by now!" I said.

"Yes, sir, you can even get used to the whistle of a bullet—that is, used to hiding the involuntary pounding of your heart."

"On the contrary, I've heard that many an old soldier actually finds that music pleasant."

"Of course, if it comes to that, it is pleasant—but only because the heart beats harder. Look!" he added, pointing east. "What a country!"

And indeed, I could hardly hope to see such a panorama anywhere else. Beneath us lay the Koishaur Valley, crossed by the Aragva and another stream like two silver threads; a bluish mist drifted along the valley, fleeing into the neighboring ravines from the warm rays of morning. To right and left, mountain peaks rose higher and higher, intersecting one another and stretching away under snow and thickets; in the

distance stood the same mountains, which now looked like two cliffs, one like the other. All that snow blazed in the crimson light, so bright and cheerful that it seemed one could live there forever. The sun was scarcely visible behind the dark-blue mountain, which only a trained eye could distinguish from a thundercloud; but above it ran a blood-red streak, which my companion pointed out in particular.

"I told you," he cried, "the weather would turn foul today! We must hurry, or it may catch us on Mount Krestov. Get on!" he shouted to the drivers.

Chains were placed under the wheels instead of drags so they wouldn't slide. The drivers took the horses by the reins, and we began the descent. There was a cliff on the right and a precipice on the left, so deep that an entire Ossetian village at the bottom looked like a swallow's nest. I shuddered at the thought that, often in the dead of night, on that very road—where two wagons couldn't pass—a courier drove some ten times a year without climbing down from his rickety vehicle. One of our drivers was a Russian peasant from Yaroslavl, the other an Ossete. The Ossete unhitched the lead horses in good time and led the shaft horse by the reins, taking every possible precaution—but our reckless countryman didn't even climb down from his box! When I remarked that he might make a little effort, at least for the sake of my portmanteau, since I had no desire to climb down into the abyss after it, he answered:

"Eh, master, with Heaven's help we'll arrive safe and sound, just like the others. It's not our first time, you know."

And he was right. We could just as easily have failed to arrive at all; but arrive we did, all the same. If people would only think a little more, they would realize that life isn't worth taking so much trouble over.

Perhaps, though, you'd like to know how Bela's story ends. First of all, this isn't a novel but a collection of travel notes, so I can't make the staff captain tell the story before he actually told

it. You'll have to wait a little, or, if you like, turn ahead a few pages. I wouldn't recommend that, though, because the crossing of Mount Krestov (or, as the learned Gamba calls it, le mont St. Christophe 15) is worth your curiosity.

Well, then, we descended from Mount Gut into the Chertov Valley... Now there's a romantic name for you! You're already imagining the devil's lair among inaccessible cliffs—but you'd be wrong. The name "Chertov" comes from cherta (boundary line), not chort (devil), because the valley once marked Georgia's border. We found it choked with snowdrifts, which vividly reminded us of Saratov, Tambov, and other charming places in our homeland.

"Look, there's Krestov!" said the staff captain as we descended into the Chertov Valley, pointing out a hill covered in snow. The black outline of a stone cross stood on its summit, and beside it ran a barely visible road that travelers used only when the side road was blocked by snow. Our drivers said no avalanches had fallen yet, and spared the horses by taking us around the mountain. At a bend, we met four or five Ossetes who offered their help; grabbing the wheels, they began pulling and steadying our cart with a shout. It was indeed a dangerous road: on the right, masses of snow hung overhead, seeming ready to break off at the first gust of wind and fall into the ravine. The narrow road was partly snow-covered; in many places the snow gave way underfoot, and elsewhere the sun by day and frost by night had turned it to ice, so the horses kept falling and we could barely make our way. On the left yawned a deep chasm, through which a torrent rushed, at times hidden beneath a crust of ice, at others leaping and foaming over black rocks. After two hours, we had barely made it around Mount Krestov—two versts in two hours! Meanwhile, clouds had descended, and hail and snow began to fall. The wind burst into the ravines, howling and whistling like Nightingale the Robber. Soon the stone cross disappeared into the mist, whose

billows rushed in from the east in ever denser, more compact masses...

By the way, there is a strange but widespread tradition about that stone cross: that Emperor Peter the First put it up while traveling through the Caucasus. But first, the emperor went no farther than Daghestan; and second, the cross itself bears a large-lettered inscription saying that it was erected by order of General Ermolov, in 1824. Still, despite the inscription, the tradition has taken such firm root that you really don't know what to believe—especially since people aren't in the habit of believing inscriptions.

To reach the station at Kobi, we still had to descend about five versts over ice-covered rocks and slushy snow. The horses were exhausted; we were freezing; the snowstorm droned with ever-increasing force, exactly like the storms of our own northern land, only its wild melodies sounded sadder and more melancholy.

"O Exile," I thought, "you are weeping for your wide, free steppes! There you can spread your cold wings, but here you are stifled and confined, like an eagle beating its wings with a shriek against the bars of its iron cage!"

"Things look bad," said the staff captain. "Look! There's nothing to see all around us but mist and snow. At any moment we could tumble into an abyss or get stuck in a cleft; and farther down, I dare say, the Baidara has risen so high that we can't cross it. Oh, this Asia—I know it! People are like rivers: you can't trust any of them!"

The drivers shouted and cursed, beating the horses, which snorted, stubbornly resisted, and refused to move, no matter how eloquently the whips spoke.

"Your honor," one of the drivers said to me at last, "you see, we'll never reach Kobi today. Won't you order us to turn left while we still can? There's something black over there on the slope—probably huts. Travelers always stop there in bad

weather, sir. They say," he added, pointing to the Ossetes, "they'll lead us there if you give them a tip."

"I know that, my friend; I know it without your telling me," said the staff captain. "Oh, these beasts! They're delighted to seize any excuse to extort a tip!"

"You must admit, though," I said, "we'd be worse off without them."

"Exactly, exactly," he grumbled to himself. "I know these guides well! They instinctively sniff out a chance to take advantage of people. As if we couldn't find the way without them!"

So we turned left and, somehow, after a good deal of trouble, made our way to the miserable shelter, consisting of two huts built of stone slabs and rubble and surrounded by a wall of the same material. Our ragged hosts welcomed us eagerly. I later learned that the government provides them with money and food on condition that they shelter travelers caught in a storm.

Chapter 8

"EVERYTHING IS FOR THE BEST," I said, sitting down by the fire. "Now you can finish telling me your story about Bela. I'm sure what you've told me so far wasn't the end of it."

"Why are you so sure?" the staff captain answered, winking and smiling slyly.

"Because things don't happen like that. A story with such an unusual beginning must have an unusual ending, too."

"You've guessed, of course"...

"I'm very glad to hear that."

"It's all very well for you to be glad, but it truly makes me sad when I think about it. Bela was a splendid girl. In time, I grew as fond of her as if she were my own daughter, and she loved me. I should tell you that I have no family. I haven't heard from my father or mother in about twelve years, and when I was younger, I never thought about getting a wife—and now, you know, that wouldn't do. So I was glad to have someone to spoil. She used to sing for us or dance the Lezginka. 17... And what a dancer she was! I've seen our own ladies in provincial society; and once, sir, about twenty years ago, I even went to the Nobles' Club in Moscow—but was there a woman who could compare with her? Not one! Grigori Aleksandrovich dressed her up like a doll, petted and pampered her, and it was astonishing to see how pretty she grew while she lived with us. The sunburn faded from her face and hands, and her cheeks took on a rosy color... What a merry girl she was! Always teasing me, the little rogue!... Heaven forgive her!

"And when you told her that her father had died?"

"We kept it from her for a long time, until she had grown accustomed to her situation. Then, when she was told, she cried for a day or two and forgot all about it."

"For about four months, everything went as well as it possibly could. Grigori Aleksandrovich, as I think I've already mentioned, was passionately fond of hunting; he was always eager to head into the forest after boars or wild goats—but now he scarcely went beyond the fortress wall. All at once, though, I noticed him falling into his old spells of abstraction, pacing his room with his hands clasped behind his back. One day, after that, he set off shooting without telling anyone. We didn't see him all morning; then it happened again, and again—more and more often...

"'This doesn't look good!' I said to myself. 'Something must have come between them!'"

"One morning I went to see them—I can picture it all as clearly as if it were happening now. Bela was sitting on the bed in a black silk jacket, looking pale and so sad that I was alarmed."

"'Where's Pechorin?' I asked.

"'Hunting.'

"'When did he leave—today?'

"She was silent, as if she found it hard to answer.

"'No, he's been gone since yesterday,' she said at last, with a heavy sigh."

"'Surely nothing has happened to him!'

"'Yesterday I spent the whole day thinking,' she answered through her tears. 'I imagined all sorts of misfortunes. First I thought a wild boar had wounded him; then I imagined a Chechen had carried him off into the mountains... But now I think he doesn't love me anymore.'"

"'Honestly, my dear girl, you couldn't have imagined anything worse!'

"She burst into tears, then proudly raised her head, wiped them away, and went on:

"'If he doesn't love me, who's stopping him from sending me home? I'm not forcing him to stay. But if things go on like this, I'll leave on my own—I'm not a slave; I'm a prince's daughter!'...

"I tried to reason with her.

"'Listen, Bela. You see, he can't stay here with you forever, as if he were sewn to your skirt. He's a young man and loves to hunt. He'll go off, but you'll see he'll come back; and if you're unhappy, you'll soon make him tired of you.'

"'That's true, that's true!' she said. 'I'll be cheerful.'

"With a burst of laughter, she grabbed her tambourine and began to sing, dance, and leap about me. But that didn't last long either; she fell back onto the bed and buried her face in her hands."

"What could I do with her? You know I've never been used to women's company. I thought and thought about how to cheer her up, but couldn't come up with anything. For a while we both sat in silence... It was an awful situation, sir!"

"At last I said to her:

"'Would you like to go for a walk along the rampart? The weather's lovely.'

"This was in September, and it really was a beautiful day, bright but not too hot. The mountains looked as clear as if they were only a hand's breadth away. We went out and walked back and forth along the fortress wall in silence. At last she sat down on the grass, and I sat beside her. Honestly, it's funny to think of it now! I used to run after her like a nursemaid!"

"Our fortress stood high up, and the view from the rampart was magnificent. On one side, the broad clearing, cut by a few ravines, ended at the forest, which stretched all the way to the mountain ridge. Here and there, villages rose from the clearing, sending up smoke, while herds of horses wandered about.

On the other side ran a little stream, and close to its banks began the dense undergrowth covering the rocky heights that joined the main range of the Caucasus. We sat in a corner of the bastion, where we could see everything on both sides. Suddenly I saw someone on a gray horse riding out of the forest. He came closer and closer until he finally stopped on the far side of the river, about a hundred fathoms away, and began riding his horse around in circles like a madman. 'Strange!' I thought."

"'Look, Bela,' I said, 'you have young eyes—what kind of horseman is that? Who has he come to entertain?'...

"'It's Kazbich!' she exclaimed after a glance.

"'Ah, the robber! Has he come to laugh at us?'

"I looked closely, and sure enough, it was Kazbich, with his dark face, still as ragged and dirty as ever."

"'That's my father's horse!' Bela said, grabbing my arm.

"She was trembling like a leaf, her eyes sparkling.

"'Aha!' I said to myself. 'There's still a robber's blood in your veins, my dear!'

"'Come here,' I said to the sentry. 'Check your gun and knock that gallant off his horse for me—and I'll give you a silver ruble.'

"'All right, sir, but he won't stand still.'

"'Tell him to!' I said, laughing.

"'Hey, friend!' the sentry called, waving his hand. 'Wait a moment. Why are you spinning around like a top?'

"Kazbich stopped and listened to the sentry—probably thinking we wanted to parley with him. Quite the opposite!... My grenadier took aim... Bang!... He missed!... Just as the powder flashed in the pan, Kazbich nudged his horse, which jumped to one side. He stood up in his stirrups, shouted something in his own language, made a threatening gesture with his whip—and rode off."

"'Aren't you ashamed of yourself?' I said to the sentry."

"'He's gone off to die, sir,' he answered. 'You can't kill one of that cursed race with a single shot.'"

"A quarter of an hour later, Pechorin returned from hunting. Bela threw herself around his neck without a complaint or a reproach about his long absence!... By then, even I was angry with him!"

"'Good heavens!' I said. 'Kazbich was just over on the other side of the river, and we shot at him. You could easily have run into him, you know! These mountaineers are a vindictive lot! Don't you think he suspects you helped Azamat? And I'd bet he recognized Bela today! I know he was desperately in love with her a year ago—he told me so himself—and if he'd had any hope of putting together a proper bride-price, he would certainly have asked for her hand.'"

"At that, Pechorin grew thoughtful."

"'Yes,' he answered. 'We must be more careful. Bela, from now on you mustn't walk on the rampart anymore.'"

"That evening I had a long talk with him. I was upset that his feelings for the poor girl had changed. Besides spending half the day hunting, he had grown cold toward her. He rarely held her close, and she was beginning to waste away visibly; her little face had grown drawn, and her large eyes were losing their brightness.

"'Why are you sighing, Bela?' I would ask her. 'Are you sad?'

"'No!'

"'Do you want anything?'

"'No!'

"'Are you missing your family?'

"'I have no family!'

"Some days, I couldn't get more than a 'Yes' or 'No' out of her.

"So I went straight to Pechorin and talked to him about her.

Chapter 9

"'LISTEN, Maksim Maksimych,' Pechorin said. 'I have an unfortunate temperament. Whether it comes from my upbringing or is innate, I don't know. I know only that if I make others unhappy, I'm no less unhappy myself. Of course, that's little consolation to them—but the fact remains. In my youth, as soon as I was no longer under my relatives' care, I threw myself recklessly into every pleasure money could buy—and, naturally, they soon grew tiresome. Then I plunged into fashionable society, and that, too, soon bored me. I fell in love with fashionable beauties, and they loved me, but only my imagination and vanity were stirred; my heart remained empty... I started reading and studying—but the sciences soon wearied me, too. I saw that neither fame nor happiness depended on them at all, because the happiest people are uneducated, and fame is a matter of luck—you only have to be clever. Then I grew bored... Soon afterward I was transferred to the Caucasus, and that was the happiest time of my life. I hoped I could never be bored under the Chechen bullets—a vain hope! Within a month I had grown so used to their whistling and to death being so near that, to tell the truth, I paid more attention to the gnats—and I was more bored than ever, because I had lost what was almost my last hope. When I saw Bela in my house, when I first held her on my knee and kissed her black hair, I, fool that I was, thought she was an angel sent to me by a kindly fate... I was wrong again. A savage's love is little better than a society lady's; the one's crude ignorance

and simplicity weary you as much as the other's coquetry. I'm not saying I don't still love her. I'm grateful to her for a few very sweet moments; I'd give my life for her—but I'm bored with her... Whether I'm a fool or a villain, I don't know; but one thing is certain: I deserve pity, too—perhaps more than she does. The world has spoiled my soul. My imagination is restless, my heart insatiable. Nothing matters much to me. I grow as used to sorrow as to joy, and my life grows emptier by the day. I have only one recourse left: travel.

"'As soon as I can, I'll set off—but not for Europe. God forbid! I'll go to America, Arabia, India—perhaps I'll die somewhere along the way. At any rate, I'm sure the storms and bad roads will keep that last consolation from wearing out anytime soon!'

"He went on speaking like this for a long time, and his words stayed stamped in my memory, because it was the first time I'd heard such things from a twenty-five-year-old—and may Heaven grant it will be the last. Isn't it astonishing? Please tell me," the staff captain went on, appealing to me. "You used to live in the capital, I believe, and not very long ago. Is it possible that all the young men there are like that?"

I replied that quite a few people talked that way, and that probably some of them were even sincere; that disillusionment, like every other fad, had begun among the upper classes and trickled down to the lower ones, where it was now worn threadbare; and that those who were genuinely bored now tried to hide their misfortune as if it were a vice. The staff captain didn't understand these subtleties. He shook his head and smiled slyly.

"Still, I suppose the French started the fashion?"

"No, the English."

"Aha, there you have it!" he said. "They've always been terrible drunkards, you know!"

I couldn't help recalling a certain woman in Moscow who used to insist that Byron was nothing but a drunkard. The staff captain's remark, though, was more understandable: since he avoided strong drink, he naturally tried to convince himself that drunkenness caused all the world's misfortunes.

Chapter 10

MEANWHILE, the staff captain continued his story.

"Kazbich never showed up again, but somehow—I don't know why—I couldn't shake the idea that he'd had a reason for coming and had some mischief in mind.

"One day Pechorin tried to persuade me to go boar hunting with him. I refused for a long time. What was new about a wild boar to me?

"Still, he dragged me along. We took four or five soldiers and set off early in the morning. Until ten o'clock we searched the reeds and the woods, but couldn't find a single wild animal!

"'I say, shouldn't we head back?' I said. 'What's the point of staying? It's obvious we picked an unlucky day!'

"But despite the heat and exhaustion, Pechorin didn't want to come back empty-handed... That was the kind of man he was: whatever he set his mind on, he had to get. Clearly, his indulgent mother had spoiled him as a child. At last, around noon, we found one of those cursed wild boars. Bang! Bang! No good—it bolted into the reeds. What an unlucky day!... After a short rest, we set off for home...

"We rode side by side in silence, letting the horses choose their pace. We were almost at the fortress; only the brushwood hid it from view. Suddenly, a shot rang out... We looked at each other, both struck by the same suspicion... We galloped toward the sound, looked, and saw the soldiers crowded together on the rampart, pointing toward a field where a rider was racing at full speed, holding something white across his

saddle. Grigori Aleksandrovich let out a Chechen's yell, pulled his gun from its case, and gave chase. I followed him.

"Luckily, because our hunt had gone so badly, our horses weren't tired. They strained under us, and with every moment we drew closer... At last I recognized Kazbich, though I couldn't make out what he was holding in front of him.

"Then I caught up with Pechorin and shouted:

"'It's Kazbich!'

"He glanced at me, nodded, and struck his horse with the whip.

"At last we were within shooting range of Kazbich. I don't know whether his horse was tired or simply not as good as ours, but despite all his efforts it wasn't moving very fast. I imagine he remembered his Karagyoz just then!

"I looked at Pechorin. He was taking aim as he galloped...

"'Don't shoot!' I cried. 'Save your shot! We'll catch up with him anyway.'

"Oh, these young men! Always firing at the wrong moment! The shot rang out, and the bullet shattered one of the horse's hind legs. It bounded forward a few more times, stumbled, and fell to its knees. Kazbich leaped down, and then we saw that he was holding a woman in his arms—a woman wrapped in a veil. It was Bela—poor Bela! He shouted something to us in his own language and raised his dagger over her... There was no time to lose. I fired in my turn, without aiming. The bullet probably hit him in the shoulder, because his hand suddenly dropped. When the smoke cleared, we saw the wounded horse lying on the ground and Bela beside it; Kazbich, his gun cast aside, was scrambling like a cat up the cliff through the brushwood. I would have liked to bring him down from there, but I didn't have a loaded charge ready. We jumped off our horses and rushed to Bela. Poor girl! She lay motionless, blood streaming from her wound. The villain! If he'd stabbed her through the heart—well and good; at least

everything would have ended then and there. But to stab her in the back like that—the scoundrel! She was unconscious. We tore the veil into strips and bound the wound as tightly as we could. Pechorin kissed her cold lips in vain; there was no bringing her around.

"Pechorin mounted, and I lifted Bela from the ground and somehow managed to seat her in front of him on the saddle. He put an arm around her, and we rode back.

"'Look, Maksim Maksimych,' said Grigori Aleksandrovich after a few moments of silence. 'We'll never bring her back alive at this rate.'

"'You're right!' I said, and we drove our horses into a full gallop."

Chapter 11

"A CROWD WAS WAITING FOR us at the fortress gate. We carefully carried the wounded girl to Pechorin's quarters and sent for the doctor. He was drunk, but he came, examined the wound, and announced that she couldn't live more than a day. He was wrong, though."

"She recovered?" I asked the staff captain, grabbing his arm and involuntarily rejoicing.

"No," he replied, "but the doctor was wrong by that much: she lived two days longer."

"But explain how Kazbich managed to get away with her!"

"It happened like this: despite Pechorin's orders, she went out of the fortress and down to the river. It was a very hot day, you know, and she sat on a rock with her feet in the water. Kazbich crept up, pounced on her, silenced her, and dragged her into the bushes. Then he sprang onto his horse and rode off. Meanwhile, she managed to cry out; the sentries were alerted and fired, but missed, and then we arrived on the scene."

"But why did Kazbich want to carry her off?"

"Good heavens! Everyone knows the Circassians are a race of thieves; they can't keep their hands off anything left lying around! They may not want a thing, but they'll steal it anyway. Still, you shouldn't be too hard on them. Besides, he'd been in love with her for a long time."

"And Bela died?"

"Yes, she died, but she suffered for a long time, and we were all worn out caring for her, I can tell you. Around ten that

evening she came to. We were sitting by her bed. As soon as she opened her eyes, she began calling for Pechorin."

"'I'm here beside you, my janechka' (that is, 'my darling'), he answered, taking her hand.

"'I'm going to die,' she said.

"We tried to comfort her, telling her the doctor had promised he would certainly cure her. She shook her little head and turned to the wall—she didn't want to die!...

"That night she became delirious. Her head burned, and at times a feverish fit convulsed her whole body. She spoke incoherently about her father and brother; she longed for the mountains, for her home... Then she spoke of Pechorin too, called him all sorts of affectionate names, or reproached him for no longer loving his janechka.

"He listened in silence, his head bowed in his hands; yet the whole time I didn't see a single tear on his lashes. I don't know whether he truly couldn't cry or was holding himself back, but I've never seen anything more pitiful."

"Toward morning the delirium passed. For an hour or so she lay motionless and pale, so weak it was barely possible to tell she was breathing. Then she grew a little better and began to talk. About what, do you think? Such thoughts come only to the dying!... She lamented that she wasn't a Christian, that in the next world her soul would never meet Grigori Aleksandrovich's, and that another woman would be his companion in Paradise. It occurred to me to baptize her before she died. I told her what I was thinking; she looked at me uncertainly and couldn't speak for a long time. At last she said she would die in the faith she'd been born into. A whole day passed that way. What a change it made in her! Her pale cheeks grew hollow, her eyes grew enormous, her lips burned. She felt a consuming heat inside her, as if a red-hot blade were piercing her chest."

"The second night came. We didn't close our eyes or leave her bedside. She suffered terribly and groaned; whenever the pain began to ease, she tried to assure Grigori Aleksandrovich she felt better, urged him to go to bed, kissed his hand, and wouldn't let it go. Before morning she began to feel the death agony and toss about. She knocked off the bandage, and the blood flowed again. When we bandaged the wound once more, she grew quiet for a moment and begged Pechorin to kiss her. He knelt beside the bed, lifted her head from the pillow, and pressed his lips to hers, which were growing cold. She threw her trembling arms tightly around his neck, as if she meant to give him her soul with that kiss.—No, it was better that she died! What would have become of her if Grigori Aleksandrovich had abandoned her? And sooner or later, he would have."

"For half the following day she was calm, silent, and docile, no matter how much the doctor tortured her with his poultices and mixtures."

"'Good heavens!' I said to him. 'You said yourself she was certain to die, so what's the point of all these treatments?'

"'Even so, it's better to do all this,' he replied, 'so I can have a clear conscience.'

"Some conscience, that!"

"After midday Bela began to suffer from thirst. We opened the windows, but it was even hotter outside than in the room; we put ice around the bed—all to no avail. I knew that this unbearable thirst was a sign the end was near, and I told Pechorin so."

"'Water, water!' she said hoarsely, raising herself from the bed.

"Pechorin turned white as a sheet, grabbed a glass, filled it, and gave it to her. I covered my eyes with my hands and began to say a prayer—I can't remember which... Yes, my friend, I've seen many people die in hospitals and on battlefields, but this

was something entirely different! Still, I must confess, one thing grieves me: she died without once thinking of me. And I loved her, I should think, like a father!... Well, may God forgive her!... And, truth be told, who am I that she should have remembered me as she was dying?...

"As soon as she drank the water, she felt better—but about three minutes later, she breathed her last! We held a mirror to her lips—it didn't fog!"

"I led Pechorin out of the room, and we went up to the fortress rampart. For a long time we walked side by side, back and forth, without a word, our hands clasped behind our backs. His face showed nothing unusual—and that annoyed me. If I'd been in his place, I would have died of grief. At last he sat down on the ground in the shade and began to draw something in the sand with his stick. More out of politeness than anything, you know, I tried to console him and began to talk. He raised his head and burst out laughing! A cold shudder ran through me at that laugh... I went away to order a coffin."

"I admit that part of the reason I kept busy that way was to distract myself. I had a little piece of Circassian cloth, and I covered the coffin with it and decorated it with some Circassian silver lace that Grigori Aleksandrovich had bought for Bela herself."

"Early the next morning we buried her behind the fortress, by the river, beside the spot where she had sat for the last time. White acacia shrubs and elder trees have since grown around her little grave. I would have liked to put up a cross, but that wouldn't have been appropriate, you know—after all, she wasn't a Christian."

"And what happened to Pechorin?" I asked.

"Pechorin was ill for a long time and grew thin, poor fellow, but after that we never spoke of Bela. I could see it would upset him, so what would have been the point? About three months later he was assigned to the E——Regiment and left for

Georgia. We've never met since. Though, now that I think of it, someone told me not long ago that he'd returned to Russia —but his name wasn't in the corps' general orders. Besides, news reaches the likes of us late."

After that—probably to drown out sad memories—he launched into a long explanation of how unpleasant it was to hear news a year late.

I didn't interrupt him, and I wasn't listening.

An hour later, we had a chance to continue our journey. The snowstorm died down, the sky cleared, and we set off. On the way, I found myself turning the conversation to Bela and Pechorin.

"Have you heard what became of Kazbich?" I asked.

"Kazbich? Honestly, I don't know. I've heard that among the Shapsugs, on our right flank, there's a certain Kazbich, a daredevil who rides along at a walking pace in a red tunic, under our bullets, and bows politely whenever one whistles past him—but it can hardly be the same man!"...

At Kobi, Maksim Maksimych and I went our separate ways. I hurried on, and he couldn't follow because of his heavy luggage. We had no hope of ever meeting again, but meet we did —and, if you like, I'll tell you how. It's quite a story... You must admit, though, that Maksim Maksimych is a man worthy of every respect... If you agree, I'll feel fully repaid for my perhaps overly long story.

Book 2

Maksim Maksimych

AFTER PARTING FROM MAKSIM MAKSIMYCH, I rode briskly through the gorges of the Terek and Darial, had breakfast in Kazbek, drank tea in Lars, and reached Vladikavkaz in time for supper. I'll spare you descriptions of the mountains, along with meaningless exclamations and word-pictures that conjure up no image—especially for those who have never been to the Caucasus. I'll also leave out the statistical observations, which I'm quite sure no one would read.

I stayed at the inn used by all travelers in those parts. By the way, there was no one there you could order to roast your pheasant and cook your cabbage soup, because the three veterans who ran the inn were either so stupid or so drunk that it was impossible to get any sense out of them.

I was told I would have to stay there three more days because the "Adventure" had not yet arrived from Ekaterinograd and therefore couldn't begin the return journey. What a misadventure! 18... But a bad pun is no comfort to a Russian. To give myself something to do, I decided to write down the story of Bela, which I had heard from Maksim Maksimych—never imagining that it would be the first link in a long chain of stories. You see how an insignificant event can sometimes have dire consequences!... Perhaps, though, you don't know what the "Adventure" is. It's a convoy—a half-company of

infantry with a cannon—that escorts baggage trains through Kabardia, from Vladikavkaz to Ekaterinograd.

The first day dragged unbearably. Early the next morning, a carriage drove into the courtyard... Aha! Maksim Maksimych!... We greeted each other like old friends. I offered to share my room with him, and he accepted my hospitality without ceremony. He even clapped me on the shoulder and puckered his lips into something like a smile—a queer fellow, that!...

Maksim Maksimych was a master of the culinary arts. He roasted the pheasant astonishingly well and basted it skillfully with cucumber sauce. I had to admit that without him I would have been stuck with a diet of dry food. A bottle of Kakhetian wine helped us forget how modest the meal was—one dish in all. Then we lit our pipes, took our chairs, and sat down—I by the window, he by the stove, where a fire had been lit because the day was cold and damp. We sat in silence. What did we have to talk about? He had already told me everything interesting about himself, and I had nothing to tell. I looked out the window. Here and there, behind the trees, I caught glimpses of poor, low houses scattered along the bank of the Terek, which flowed toward the sea, growing wider as it went. Farther off rose the dark-blue, jagged wall of the mountains, with Mount Kazbek peering above it in his white high priest's hat. I said goodbye to them in my mind; I was sorry to leave...

We sat like that for quite a while. The sun was sinking behind the cold peaks, and a whitish mist was beginning to spread over the valleys, when the silence was broken by the jingle of a traveling carriage and the drivers shouting in the street. A few carriages, accompanied by dirty Armenians, drove into the inn's courtyard, followed by an empty traveling carriage. Its light motion, comfortable interior, and elegant appearance gave it a foreign air. A man with large mustaches walked behind it. He wore a Hungarian jacket and was rather

well dressed for a servant. From the bold way he shook the ashes out of his pipe and shouted at the coachman, there could be no mistaking his profession. He was clearly the spoiled servant of an indolent master—something like a Russian Figaro.

"Tell me, my good man," I called to him from the window. "What is it? Has the 'Adventure' arrived?"

He shot me a rather insolent glance, straightened his cravat, and turned away. An Armenian walking nearby smiled and answered for him: the "Adventure" had indeed arrived and would set out on the return journey the next morning.

"Thank heavens!" said Maksim Maksimych, who had come up to the window at that moment. "What a wonderful carriage!" he added. "It probably belongs to some official going to Tiflis for a judicial inquiry. You can tell he doesn't know our little mountains! No, my friend, you're not cut out for this! They aren't for the likes of you; why, they'd shake even an English carriage to pieces! But who could it be? Let's go and find out."

We went out into the corridor. At the far end, an open door led into a side room, where the servant and a driver were hauling in portmanteaus.

"I say, my man!" the staff captain asked him. "Whose is that marvelous carriage? A beautiful carriage!"

Without turning around, the servant muttered something to himself as he opened a portmanteau. Maksim Maksimych grew angry.

"I'm talking to you, my friend!" he said, touching the rude fellow on the shoulder.

"Whose carriage? My master's."

"And who is your master?"

"Pechorin—"

"What did you say? What? Pechorin? Great heavens!... Didn't he serve in the Caucasus?" Maksim Maksimych

exclaimed, tugging at my sleeve. His eyes were sparkling with joy.

"Yes, I think he served there—but I haven't been with him long."

"Well! Exactly!... Exactly!... Grigori Aleksandrovich? That's his name, of course? Your master and I were friends," he added, giving the servant such a friendly clap on the shoulder that the man staggered.

"Excuse me, sir, you're in my way," the servant said, frowning.

"What a fellow you are, my friend! Don't you know your master and I were bosom friends and lived together?... But where is he staying?"

The servant said Pechorin had gone to dine and spend the night at Colonel N——'s.

"But won't he come by here this evening?" said Maksim Maksimych. "Or are you going over to him to fetch something?... If you do, tell him Maksim Maksimych is here; just say that—he'll know! I'll give you half a ruble for a tip!"

The servant made a scornful face at such a modest offer, but assured Maksim Maksimych he would deliver the message.

"He'll come running over right away!" Maksim Maksimych said triumphantly. "I'll go wait outside the gate! Ah, it's a shame I don't know Colonel N——!"

Maksim Maksimych sat down on a little bench outside the gate, and I went to my room. I admit I was also waiting for Pechorin with some impatience, although the staff captain's story had given me a decidedly unfavorable impression of him. Still, certain traits in his character struck me as remarkable. An hour later, one of the old soldiers brought in a steaming samovar and a teapot.

"Won't you have some tea, Maksim Maksimych?" I called out the window.

"Thank you. Somehow, I'm not thirsty."

"Oh, do have some! It's late, you know, and cold!"

"No, thank you..."

"Well, suit yourself!"

I began my tea alone. About ten minutes later, my old captain came in.

"You're right, you know; I'd be better off having a little tea—but I was waiting for Pechorin. His man has been gone a long time, but evidently something has held him up."

The staff captain quickly drank a cup of tea, refused a second, and went back outside the gate, looking rather uneasy. It was clear that the old man was hurt by Pechorin's neglect, all the more because he had been telling me only a short time earlier about their friendship, and until an hour ago had been convinced that Pechorin would come running as soon as he heard his name.

It was already late and dark when I opened the window again and called to Maksim Maksimych, saying it was time to go to bed. He muttered something under his breath. I repeated my invitation, but he didn't answer.

I left a candle on the stove bench and, wrapping myself in my cloak, lay down on the couch and soon fell asleep. I would have slept peacefully through the night if Maksim Maksimych hadn't woken me as he came into the room. It was very late. He threw his pipe onto the table, began pacing back and forth and rattling things around by the stove. At last he lay down, but for a long time he kept coughing, spitting, and tossing and turning.

"The bugs are biting you, aren't they?" I asked.

"Yes, that's it," he answered with a heavy sigh.

I woke early the next morning, but Maksim Maksimych was already up. I found him sitting on the little bench by the gate.

"I have to go to the Commandant," he said, "so if Pechorin comes, please send for me."...

I promised. He ran off as if his limbs had regained their youthful strength and flexibility.

The morning was fresh and lovely. Golden clouds had gathered over the mountain peaks, like a new range of mountains in the sky. A wide square lay in front of the gate; beyond it, the bazaar was teeming with people, since it was Sunday. Barefoot Ossete boys carrying wallets of honeycomb on their shoulders crowded around me. I cursed them; I had other things on my mind—I was beginning to share the worthy staff captain's uneasiness.

Less than ten minutes later, the man we were waiting for appeared at the far end of the square. He was walking with Colonel N., who accompanied him to the inn, said goodbye, and then returned to the fortress. I immediately sent one of the old soldiers to fetch Maksim Maksimych.

Pechorin's manservant went out to meet him and told him they were about to leave. He handed Pechorin a box of cigars, received a few orders, and went off to attend to his business. His master lit a cigar, yawned once or twice, and sat down on the bench on the other side of the gate. I must now describe him to you.

He was of medium height. His well-proportioned, slim build and broad shoulders suggested a strong constitution, able to endure all the hardships of a nomadic life and changes of climate, and to resist both the corrupting effects of life in the capital and the storms of the soul. His velvet coat, dusty from travel, was fastened only at the two bottom buttons, revealing dazzlingly white linen that marked him as a gentleman. His travel-stained gloves seemed made especially for his small, aristocratic hand, and when he took one off, I was astonished by his slender, pale fingers. His gait was casual and lazy, but I noticed that he didn't swing his arms—a sure sign of a secretive nature. These observations, however, are my own, and I have no wish to make you accept them blindly. As he sat down on

the bench, his upright figure slumped as if there wasn't a single bone in his back. His whole posture suggested a certain nervous weakness; sitting there, he looked like one of Balzac's thirty-year-old coquettes resting in her downy armchair after an exhausting ball. At first glance, I wouldn't have guessed he was more than twenty-three, though later I would have put his age at thirty. His smile had something childlike about it. His skin was almost feminine in its delicacy. His naturally curly fair hair framed his pale, noble brow in the most picturesque way. Only after studying it for a long time could one make out traces of crossing wrinkles, probably more pronounced in moments of anger or emotional disturbance. Despite his fair hair, his mustache and eyebrows were black—a mark of good breeding in a man, just as a white horse's black mane and tail are. To complete the portrait, I'll add that he had a slightly upturned nose, dazzlingly white teeth, and brown eyes—but I must say a little more about his eyes.

First, they never laughed when he laughed. Have you ever noticed the same peculiarity in certain people?... It's a sign either of a bad nature or of deep, constant grief. From beneath his half-lowered eyelashes, they shone with a kind of phosphorescent light, if I may put it that way—not the reflection of a passionate soul or a playful imagination, but a gleam like polished steel, dazzling yet cold. His glance—brief, but piercing and weighty—left the unpleasant impression of an indiscreet question, and might have seemed insolent if it hadn't been so calmly unconcerned.

Perhaps all these thoughts came to me only after I had learned some details of his life; perhaps, too, his appearance would have made a completely different impression on someone else. But since you won't hear about him from anyone but me, you'll have to be content, whether you like it or not, with the description I've given. In conclusion, I'll say that, generally

speaking, he was a very handsome man, with one of those distinctive faces that women find especially attractive.

The horses were already harnessed; now and then the bell jingled on the shaft bow; and the manservant had twice gone up to Pechorin to announce that everything was ready, but there was still no sign of Maksim Maksimych. Fortunately, Pechorin was lost in thought as he gazed at the jagged blue peaks of the Caucasus, and apparently in no hurry to set out.

I went over to him.

"If you're willing to wait a little longer," I said, "you'll have the pleasure of seeing an old friend."

"Oh, right!" he answered quickly. "They told me so yesterday. But where is he?"

I looked toward the square and spotted Maksim Maksimych running as fast as he could. A few moments later, he was beside us. He could barely breathe; great drops of sweat rolled down his face; wet tufts of gray hair had escaped from under his cap and stuck to his forehead; his knees were shaking... He was about to throw himself around Pechorin's neck, but Pechorin, rather coolly, though with a welcoming smile, held out his hand. For a moment the staff captain stood frozen, but then eagerly took Pechorin's hand in both of his. He still couldn't speak.

"How glad I am to see you, dear Maksim Maksimych! Well, how are you?" Pechorin said.

"And... you...?" murmured the old man, beginning with the familiar form of address before correcting himself to the formal one, tears in his eyes. "It's been so long since I've seen you!... But where are you going?"...

"I'm going to Persia—and farther."...

"But surely you're not leaving right away?... Wait a little, my dear fellow!... Surely we aren't going to part at once?... It's been so long since we saw each other!"...

"It's time for me to go, Maksim Maksimych," he replied.

"Good heavens, good heavens! But where are you going in such a hurry? There was so much I wanted to tell you! So much I wanted to ask you!... Well, what about you? Have you retired?... What?... How have you been getting on?"

"Bored!" Pechorin answered with a smile.

"Do you remember the life we led in the fortress? It was wonderful country for hunting! You were awfully fond of shooting, you know!... And Bela?"...

Pechorin turned just slightly pale and looked away.

"Yes, I remember!" he said, almost immediately forcing a yawn.

Maksim Maksimych began pleading with him to stay another couple of hours or so.

"We'll have a splendid dinner," he said. "I have two pheasants, and the Kakhetian wine here is excellent... Not like the wine in Georgia, of course, but still among the best... We'll have a talk... You'll tell me about your life in Petersburg... Eh?"...

"Honestly, there's nothing for me to tell, dear Maksim Maksimych... But goodbye. It's time for me to leave... I'm in a hurry... Thank you for not forgetting me," he added, taking him by the hand.

The old man frowned. He was hurt and angry, though he tried to hide his feelings.

"Forget!" he growled. "I haven't forgotten anything... Well, God be with you!... This isn't how I thought we would meet."

"Come now! That's enough, that's enough!" said Pechorin, giving him a friendly embrace. "Is it possible I'm not the same as I used to be?... What can we do? Everyone has to go their own way... Will we ever meet again? God only knows!"

As he spoke, he climbed into the carriage, and the coachman was already gathering up the reins.

"Wait, wait!" Maksim Maksimych suddenly cried, gripping the carriage door. "I almost forgot entirely. Your papers were

left with me, Grigori Aleksandrovich... I carry them around wherever I go... I thought I'd find you in Georgia, but Heaven arranged for us to meet here. What should I do with them?"...

"Whatever you want!" Pechorin replied. "Good-bye."...

"So you're going to Persia?... But when will you come back?" Maksim Maksimych called after him.

By then the carriage was far away, but Pechorin made a gesture with his hand that might have meant:

"I may not come back, and there's no reason I should!"

The bell's jingle and the wheels clattering along the stony road had long since faded away, but the poor old man still stood in the same place, lost in thought.

"Yes," he said at last, trying to look indifferent, though from time to time a tear of frustration glistened on his eyelashes. "Of course we were friends—but what are friends these days?... What could I have been to him? I'm not rich; I have no rank; and besides, I'm nowhere near his age! Look what a dandy he's become since he's been back in Petersburg!... What a carriage!... What a lot of luggage!... And such a proud manservant, too!"...

He spoke with an ironic smile.

"Tell me," he went on, turning to me, "what do you make of it? Really, why the devil is he going to Persia now?... Good Lord, it's ridiculous—ridiculous!... But I always knew he was fickle, and that you could never rely on him!... Still, it's a pity he should come to a bad end... though it can't be helped!... I always said you can't expect anything good from a man who forgets his old friends!"...

Then he turned away to hide his agitation and began walking around the courtyard, circling his cart and pretending to inspect the wheels, while his eyes kept filling with tears.

"Maksim Maksimych," I said, coming up to him, "what are those papers Pechorin left with you?"

"God knows! Some sort of notes"...

"What are you going to do with them?"

"What? I'll make cartridges out of them."

"Give them to me instead."

He stared at me in surprise, muttered something through his teeth, and started rummaging in his portmanteau. He pulled out a notebook and contemptuously threw it on the ground; then a second—a third—a tenth met the same fate. His frustration seemed almost childish, and struck me as both ridiculous and pitiable...

"Here they are," he said. "Congratulations on your find!"...

"And I can do whatever I want with them?"

"Yes, print them in the newspapers if you like. What do I care? Am I his friend or relative? It's true we lived under the same roof for a long time... but haven't I lived with plenty of other people?"...

I grabbed the papers and hurried away with them, afraid the staff captain might change his mind. Soon someone came to tell us that the "Adventure" would leave in an hour. I ordered the horses to be harnessed.

I had already put on my cap when the staff captain entered the room. He apparently wasn't ready to leave. His manner was somewhat cold and restrained.

"So you're not going, Maksim Maksimych?"

"No, sir!"

"But why not?"

"Well, I haven't seen the Commandant yet, and I have to deliver some government things."

"But you went there, you know."

"I did, of course," he stammered, "but he wasn't home... and I didn't wait."

I understood. Probably for the first time in his life, the poor old man had, to put it officially, set government business aside "for the sake of his personal needs"... and what had he got in return!

"I'm very sorry, Maksim Maksimych, truly sorry," I said, "that we have to part sooner than necessary."

"What should old fellows like us be thinking, chasing after you? You young men are fashionable and proud: under Circassian bullets, you're friendly enough with us... but when you meet us afterward, you're ashamed even to shake our hands!"

"I haven't deserved those reproaches, Maksim Maksimych."

"Well, you know I'm right. Still, I wish you good luck and a pleasant journey."

We said a rather cold good-bye. The kindhearted Maksim Maksimych had become the stubborn, irritable staff captain! And why? Because Pechorin, absentmindedly or for some other reason, had offered him his hand when Maksim Maksimych was about to throw his arms around his neck! It is sad to see a young man lose his finest hopes and dreams, to see the rosy veil through which he viewed human actions and feelings drawn away from before his eyes. There is still some hope that old illusions will be replaced by new ones, just as fleeting but no less sweet. But what can replace them when a man is Maksim Maksimych's age? Whatever you do, the heart grows hard and the soul folds in on itself.

I left—alone.

Foreword to Books III, IV, and V

Concerning Pechorin's Diary

I recently learned that Pechorin had died on his way back from Persia. The news gave me great pleasure: it gave me the right to publish these notes, and I took the opportunity to put my name at the head of someone else's work. May Heaven grant that my readers won't punish me for such an innocent deception!

I must now explain why I have exposed to the public the innermost secrets of a man I never knew. If I had been his friend, that would be different: everyone understands the sly indiscretion of a true friend. But I saw Pechorin only once in my life—on the highway—and so I cannot feel toward him that inexplicable hatred which hides behind the mask of friendship, waiting for the death or misfortune of its beloved object to unleash a storm of reproaches, admonitions, mockery, and regrets.

Reading these notes, I became convinced of the sincerity of a man who has exposed his own weaknesses and vices so mercilessly. The story of a person's soul, even the pettiest soul, is hardly less interesting and useful than the history of an entire people—especially when it comes from a mature mind observing itself and is written without any egotistical wish to stir sympathy or astonishment. Rousseau's Confessions has precisely this flaw: he read it to his friends.

And so, only the desire to be useful has compelled me to publish fragments of this diary, which came into my hands by

chance. Although I have changed all the proper names, those mentioned in it will probably recognize themselves, and may find some justification for actions for which they have until now blamed a man who has ceased to have anything to do with this world. We almost always excuse what we understand.

I have included in this book only the parts of the diary that concern Pechorin's time in the Caucasus. I still have a thick notebook in which he tells the story of his whole life. Someday that, too, will stand before the world's judgment, but for many important reasons I don't dare take that responsibility upon myself now.

Some readers may want to know my own opinion of Pechorin's character. My answer is: the title of this book. "But that's malicious irony!" they'll say... I don't know.

Book 3

The First Extract from Pechorin's Diary

Taman

TAMAN IS THE NASTIEST LITTLE hole among all Russia's seaports. I nearly starved to death there, to say nothing of narrowly escaping drowning.

I arrived late at night by post carriage. The driver stopped the tired troika at the gate of the only stone house at the entrance to town. Hearing the bell jingle, the sentry, a Cossack from the Black Sea, called out sleepily in his rough voice, "Who goes there?" A Cossack noncommissioned officer and a headborough came out. I explained that I was an officer on government business, bound for the active-service detachment, and asked for official quarters. The headborough led us around town. Every hut we drove up to was occupied. The weather was cold; I had not slept for three nights; I was exhausted, and I began to lose my temper.

"Take me somewhere, you scoundrel!" I cried. "To the devil himself, as long as there's a place to stay!"

"There's one more place," the headborough replied, scratching his head. "But you won't like it, sir. It's eerie!"

Not understanding exactly what he meant by that last remark, I told him to go on. After a long ride through muddy back streets, with nothing but old fences on either side, we reached a small cabin right on the seashore.

The full moon shone on the little reed-thatched roof and the white walls of my new lodging. In the courtyard, surrounded by a rubble-stone wall, stood another miserable hut, smaller and older than the first, and badly crooked. The shore dropped steeply to the sea almost from the walls themselves,

and far below the dark-blue waves lapped with an incessant murmur. The moon gazed softly down at the restless water, which seemed to obey it, and in its light I could make out two ships some distance from shore, their black rigging motionless against the pale line of the horizon like cobwebs.

"There are ships in the harbor," I said to myself. "Tomorrow I'll leave for Gelenjik."

I had a Cossack from the frontier army with me as my servant. I told him to unload the trunk and send the driver away, then began calling for the master of the house. No answer! I knocked—everything inside was silent!... What could it mean? At last a boy of about fourteen crept out of the hall.

"Where's the master?"

"There isn't one."

"What! No master?"

"No one!"

"And the mistress?"

"She's gone to the village."

"Then who's going to open the door for me?" I said, kicking it.

The door swung open by itself, and a gust of damp air drifted out of the hut. I struck a match and held it up to the boy's face. It lit up two white eyes. He was completely blind, apparently from birth. He stood stock-still before me, and I began studying his features.

I admit I have a strong prejudice against all blind, one-eyed, deaf, mute, or disabled people, and those with hunchbacks and the like. I have noticed that a person's outward appearance is always strangely connected to his soul—as if, when the body loses a limb, the soul also loses some capacity for feeling.

So I began studying the blind boy's face. But what could you read in a face without eyes?... For a long time I gazed at him with involuntary pity, until suddenly a barely perceptible smile passed over his thin lips. I don't know why, but it made

a deeply unpleasant impression on me. I began to suspect that the boy wasn't as blind as he seemed. I tried in vain to convince myself that cataracts couldn't be faked; besides, what reason could he have for doing such a thing? But I couldn't shake my suspicion. I'm easily swayed by prejudice...

"Are you the master's son?" I asked at last.

"No."

"Then who are you?"

"An orphan—a poor boy."

"Does the mistress have any children?"

"No. Her daughter ran away with a Tartar and crossed the sea."

"What kind of Tartar?"

"The devil knows! A Crimean Tartar, a boatman from Kerch."

I went into the hut. Its entire furnishings consisted of two benches and a table, along with an enormous chest beside the stove. There wasn't a single icon on the wall—a bad sign! The sea wind blew in through the broken windowpane. I took a stub of a wax candle from my trunk, lit it, and began unpacking. I put my saber and gun in a corner, and laid my pistols on the table. I spread my felt cloak on one bench, and the Cossack put his on the other. Within ten minutes he was snoring, but I couldn't fall asleep—the image of the boy with white eyes kept hovering before me in the dark.

About an hour passed this way. The moon shone through the window, its rays playing across the hut's earthen floor. Suddenly a shadow crossed the bright strip of moonlight that cut across the floor. I sat up a little and glanced out the window. Someone ran past it again and disappeared—goodness knows where! It seemed impossible that anyone could have climbed down the steep cliff above the shore, but that was the only explanation. I got up, put on my tunic, buckled on a dagger, and slipped quietly out of the hut. The blind boy was

coming toward me. I hid by the fence, and he passed me with a sure but cautious step. He was carrying a bundle under his arm. He turned toward the harbor and started down a steep, narrow path.

"That day the mute will cry out and the blind will see," I said to myself, following just close enough to keep him in sight.

Meanwhile, clouds were covering the moon, and mist had risen over the sea. The lantern burning at the stern of a nearby ship was barely visible through the mist, and the foam of the waves glimmered along the shore, where the water seemed ready to swallow it at any moment. Descending with difficulty, I crept along the steep slope. Suddenly I saw the blind boy stop, then turn right. He walked so close to the water's edge that it seemed the waves would seize him at once and carry him away. But from the confidence with which he stepped from rock to rock and avoided the channels, it was clear he had made this journey before. At last he stopped, as though listening for something, squatted on the ground, and set the bundle beside him. I concealed myself behind a rock jutting out from the shore and watched him. A few minutes later a white figure appeared from the opposite direction. It came up to the blind boy and sat beside him. At times, the wind carried their conversation to me.

"Well?" said a woman's voice. "The storm is fierce; Yanko won't come."

"Yanko isn't afraid of storms!" the other replied.

"The mist is getting thicker," the woman said, her voice sad.

"The thicker the mist, the easier it is to slip past the guardships," came the reply.

"And if he drowns?"

"Well, what of it? You won't have a new ribbon to wear to church on Sunday."

There was a pause. One thing struck me, though: when the blind boy spoke to me, he used the Little Russian dialect, but now he was speaking pure Russian.

"You see, I'm right!" the blind boy went on, clapping his hands. "Yanko isn't afraid of the sea, or the wind, or the mist, or the coast guards! Just listen! That isn't the water splashing—you can't fool me. It's his long oars."

The woman jumped up and began anxiously gazing into the distance.

"You're imagining things!" she said. "I can't see anything."

I admit that, try as I might to make out something like a boat in the distance, I couldn't. About ten minutes passed this way, then a black speck appeared between the mountains of waves! At one moment it grew larger, at another smaller. Rising slowly on the wave crests and dropping swiftly into the troughs, the boat drew closer to shore.

"He must be a brave sailor," I thought, "to have decided to cross the twenty-verst strait on a night like this. He must have a powerful reason for doing it."

Thinking this, I watched the poor boat, my heart beating involuntarily. It plunged like a duck, then, its oars swinging rapidly like wings, leaped out of the abyss amid the foam. "Ah!" I thought. "It's going to smash against the shore at full speed and break to pieces!" But it deftly veered aside and darted unharmed into a little creek. A man of medium height, wearing a Tatar sheepskin cap, stepped out. He waved, and all three set to work hauling something from the boat. The cargo was so large that even now I can't understand how the boat didn't sink.

Each shouldered a bundle, and they set off along the shore. I soon lost sight of them. I had to go back home, but I confess that all these strange happenings had unsettled me, and I found it hard to wait for morning.

My Cossack was greatly surprised when he woke and found me fully dressed. I didn't tell him why. For a while I stood at the window, admiring the blue sky, dotted with wisps of cloud, and the distant shore of Crimea, stretching away in a lilac-colored strip and ending in a cliff. On its summit gleamed the white tower of the lighthouse. Then I went to the fortress of Phanagoriya to ask the Commandant what time I should leave for Gelenjik.

But, alas, the Commandant couldn't give me any definite information. The vessels in the harbor were all either guard ships or merchant ships that hadn't even begun loading cargo.

"Perhaps a mail boat will arrive in about three or four days," said the Commandant. "Then we'll see."

I returned home, sullen and furious. My Cossack met me at the door, looking frightened.

"Things are looking bad, sir!" he said.

"Yes, my friend; goodness knows when we'll get away!"

At this, he grew even more uneasy. Leaning toward me, he whispered:

"There's something uncanny about this place! Today I ran into a noncommissioned officer from the Black Sea—an acquaintance of mine, who was in my detachment last year. When I told him where we were staying, he said, 'That place is uncanny, old fellow; wicked people live there!'... And really, what kind of blind boy is that? He goes everywhere alone, to fetch water and buy bread at the bazaar. Clearly, people here have grown used to that sort of thing."

"Well, so what? But tell me, has the woman who runs this place shown up?"

"While you were away today, an old woman and her daughter arrived."

"What daughter? She doesn't have a daughter!"

"Goodness knows who she is, if not her daughter; but the old woman is sitting over there in the hut now."

I went into the hovel. A blazing fire burned in the stove, and they were cooking a dinner that seemed rather luxurious for poor people. The old woman answered all my questions by saying she was deaf and couldn't hear me. There was nothing to get out of her. I turned to the blind boy, who was sitting in front of the stove, feeding twigs into the fire.

"Now then, you little blind devil," I said, taking him by the ear. "Tell me, where were you wandering with that bundle last night, eh?"

The blind boy suddenly burst into tears, shrieking and wailing.

"Where did I go? I didn't go anywhere... With a bundle?... What bundle?"

This time the old woman heard him and began muttering:

"Listen to them plotting, and against a poor boy, too! Why are you grabbing him? What has he done to you?"

I'd had enough and went outside, firmly resolved to solve the riddle.

I wrapped myself in my felt cloak and sat on a rock by the fence, gazing into the distance. Before me stretched the sea, stirred up by the previous night's storm. Its monotonous roar, like the murmur of a town beginning to fall asleep, brought bygone years to mind and carried my thoughts northward to our cold capital. Caught up in my memories, I forgot my surroundings.

Perhaps an hour passed, or even longer. Suddenly something that sounded like a song caught my ear. It was a song, sung in a young, fresh woman's voice—but where was it coming from?... I listened: a harmonious melody, now drawn out and plaintive, now quick and lively. I looked around; nobody was in sight. I listened again—the sounds seemed to fall from the sky. I looked up. A young girl stood on the roof of my cabin, wearing a striped dress, her hair hanging loose—a regular water nymph. She shaded her eyes from the sun with

her hand and gazed intently into the distance. At one moment she would laugh and talk to herself; at another, she would start singing again.

I remember that song word for word:

Of their own free will

They seem to wander

Across the green sea,

Those ships, as ever

They sail onward,

With white sails billowing.
And among those ships

I can make out

My own dear boat:

Guided by two oars

(Without any

Sails) it slips along.
The storm wind rages;

And the old ships—look!

With wings spread wide,

Across the waves

They scatter and flee!
I'll greet the sea

With a deep bow:

"You vile thing, listen!

You must keep

My little boat

Safe from harm!"
For look! It carries

The most precious goods,

And brave, daring

Are the hands that steer

Through the darkness

My little boat.

It occurred to me involuntarily that I had heard the same voice the night before. I thought for a moment, and when I looked up at the roof again, the girl was gone. Suddenly she dashed past me, singing another song, snapping her fingers as she ran to the old woman. They began to quarrel. The old woman grew angry, and the girl laughed loudly. Then I saw my Undine running and frolicking again. She came up to me, stopped, and stared straight into my face as if surprised to find me there. Then she turned away casually and went quietly toward the harbor. But that wasn't all. All day she kept hovering around my lodging, singing and frolicking without pause. Strange creature! There wasn't the slightest sign of madness in her face; on the contrary, her eyes, which kept settling on me, were bright and piercing. What's more, they seemed to have a kind of magnetic power, and whenever she looked at me, she seemed to be waiting for a question. But all I had to do was open my mouth to speak, and off she ran with a sly smile.

Certainly, I had never seen a woman like her. She was not beautiful at all; but, as with other things, I have my own ideas about beauty. She had a good deal of breeding... Breeding in women, as in horses, is a great thing—a discovery for which young France deserves the credit. It—that is, breeding, not young France—is chiefly visible in the way they walk, and in their hands and feet; the nose, in particular, matters greatly. In Russia, a straight nose is rarer than a small foot.

My songstress looked no older than eighteen. The unusual suppleness of her figure, the distinctive, original way she tilted her head, her long, light-brown hair, the golden sheen of her slightly sunburned neck and shoulders, and especially her straight nose—all of it held me spellbound. Though her sidelong glances carried a certain wildness and disdain, and her smile was somehow vague, such is the power of our preferences that her straight nose drove me crazy. I fancied I had found Goethe's Mignon, that strange creature of his German imagination. And indeed they had much in common: the same quick shifts from restless agitation to complete stillness, the same enigmatic remarks, the same gamboling, the same strange songs.

Toward evening, I stopped her at the door and began this conversation with her.

"Tell me, my beauty," I asked, "what were you doing on the roof today?"

"I was looking to see which way the wind was blowing."

"Why did you want to know?"

"Happiness comes from wherever the wind blows."

"Well? Were you calling for happiness in your song?"

"Where there's singing, there's happiness too."

"But what if your song brought you sorrow?"

"Well, so what? If things don't get better, they'll get worse; and it's not far from bad back to good."

"And who taught you that song?"

"No one taught me. It comes into my head, and I sing it. Whoever is meant to hear it will hear it, and whoever isn't meant to hear it won't understand it."

"What's your name, my songstress?"

"The one who baptized me knows."

"And who baptized you?"

"How would I know?"

"What a secretive girl you are! But look, I've learned something about you"—she neither changed expression nor moved her lips, as if my discovery meant nothing to her—"I've learned that you went to the shore last night."

Then, with great seriousness, I told her everything I had seen, thinking I would embarrass her. Not at all! She burst out laughing.

"You've seen a lot, but you know little; and what you do know, keep it under lock and key."

"But suppose I took it into my head to tell the Commandant?" I said, putting on a very serious, even stern, expression.

She sprang up, began to sing, and disappeared like a bird startled from a thicket. My last words were completely out of place. I had no idea then how serious they were, but later I had reason to regret them.

As soon as evening fell, I ordered the Cossack to heat the teapot, the way we did on campaign. I lit a candle and sat at the table, smoking my traveling pipe. I was just finishing my second glass of tea when the door creaked and I heard footsteps behind me and the light rustle of a dress. I started and turned around.

It was she—my Undine. She sat down quietly opposite me without saying a word and fixed her eyes on mine. Her gaze seemed wonderfully tender, though I don't know why; it reminded me of one of those glances that, years ago, had played so tyrannically with my life. She seemed to be waiting for a question, but I remained silent, overcome by an inexplicable

embarrassment. Her agitation showed in the dull pallor that spread across her face; the hand I noticed trembling slightly moved aimlessly over the table. At one moment her breast heaved; at another she seemed to hold her breath. This little comedy was beginning to bore me, and I was about to break the silence in the most ordinary way—by offering her a glass of tea—when she suddenly sprang up, threw her arms around my neck, and pressed her moist, burning lips to mine. Darkness clouded my vision, and my head began to swim. I embraced her with all the strength of youthful passion. But she slipped from my arms like a snake, whispering in my ear as she did:

"Tonight, when everyone is asleep, go out to the shore."

She darted out of the room like an arrow.

In the hall she knocked over the teapot and a candle that was standing on the floor.

"Little devil!" cried the Cossack, who had settled on the straw and was thinking of warming himself with the leftover tea.

Only then did I come to my senses.

About two hours later, when everything in the harbor had grown quiet, I woke my Cossack.

"If I fire a pistol," I said, "run to the shore."

He stared at me with wide eyes and answered mechanically:

"Very well, sir."

I tucked a pistol into my belt and went out. She was waiting for me at the edge of the cliff. She was dressed very lightly, with a small kerchief around her supple waist.

"Follow me!" she said, taking my hand, and we started down.

I can't understand how I managed not to break my neck. At the bottom, we turned right and followed the path along which I had trailed the blind boy the previous evening. The moon had not yet risen, and only two little stars, like guardian lighthouses, twinkled in the dark-blue sky. Heavy waves rolled

one after another in a steady rhythm, barely lifting the lone boat moored to the shore.

"Let's get into the boat," my companion said.

I hesitated. I'm no fan of sentimental trips at sea, but this was no time to back out. She jumped into the boat, and I followed; before I could collect myself, I realized we were adrift.

"What is the meaning of this?" I said angrily.

"It means," she said, seating me on the bench and putting her arms around my waist, "it means that I love you!"...

Her cheek was pressed against mine, and I felt her burning breath on my face. Suddenly, something fell noisily into the water. I grabbed for my belt—my pistol was gone! Ah, then a terrible suspicion crept into my soul, and the blood rushed to my head! I looked around. We were about fifty fathoms from shore, and I couldn't swim at all! I tried to push her away, but she clung to my clothes like a cat, and then a violent wrench nearly threw me into the sea. The boat rocked, but I righted myself, and a desperate struggle began.

Fury gave me strength, but I soon found I was no match for my opponent's agility...

"What do you want?" I shouted, squeezing her little hands hard.

Her fingers crunched, but her serpentine nature withstood the pain, and she did not cry out.

"You saw us," she answered. "You'll tell on us."

With a superhuman effort, she threw me against the side of the boat; we were both hanging half overboard, her hair touching the water. The decisive moment had come. I braced my knee against the bottom of the boat, grabbed her by the hair with one hand and by the throat with the other; she let go of my clothes, and in an instant I had thrown her into the waves.

It was fairly dark now; once or twice, her head appeared for an instant amid the sea foam, and then I saw no more of her.

I found half of an old oar at the bottom of the boat, and somehow, after a long struggle, managed to make it back to the harbor. As I walked along the shore toward my hut, I found myself looking toward the place where the blind boy had waited for the night sailor the previous evening. The moon was already moving across the sky, and I thought I saw someone in white sitting on the shore. Curious, I crept closer and crouched in the grass at the top of the cliff. By leaning out a little, I could see everything happening below. I was not very surprised, but almost glad, to recognize my water nymph. She was wringing the sea foam from her long hair. Her wet clothes outlined her supple figure and full bosom.

Soon a boat appeared in the distance and rapidly drew near. As on the previous night, a man wearing a Tatar cap stepped out, but now his hair was cropped in the Cossack style, and a large knife stuck out from behind his leather belt.

"Yanko," the girl said, "it's all over!"

Then they went on talking, but so quietly that I could not make out a word.

"But where is the blind boy?" Yanko finally asked, raising his voice.

"I told him to come," she replied.

A few minutes later, the blind boy appeared, carrying a sack on his back, which they put in the boat.

"Listen!" Yanko said to the blind boy. "Keep watch over that place! You know which one I mean? There are valuable goods there. Tell"—I could not make out the name—"that I am no longer his servant. Things have gone wrong. He won't see me again. It's dangerous now. I'll go look for work somewhere else, and he'll never find another daredevil like me. Tell him, too, that if he had paid me a little better for my work, I wouldn't have left him. I can find a way anywhere, as long as the wind blows and the sea roars."

After a short pause, Yanko went on.

"She's coming with me. She can't stay here. Tell the old woman it's time for her to die; she's been here long enough, and there has to be an end to it somewhere. As for us, she'll never see us again."

"And what about me?" the blind boy asked sadly.

"What use would I have for you?" came the reply.

Meanwhile, my Undine had jumped into the boat. She beckoned to her companion. He put something in the blind boy's hand and added:

"Here, buy yourself some gingerbread."

"Is that all?" the blind boy asked.

"Well, here's some more."

The money fell and jingled against the rock.

The blind boy did not pick it up. Yanko took his seat in the boat; the wind was blowing from shore, so they hoisted the little sail and sped away. For a long time, the white sail gleamed in the moonlight among the dark waves. The blind boy remained sitting on the shore, and then I heard something that sounded like sobbing. In fact, the blind boy was crying, and his tears flowed for a long, long time... My heart grew heavy. Why had fate thrown me into the peaceful circle of these honorable smugglers? Like a stone thrown into a still well, I had disturbed their quiet, and had barely escaped sinking to the bottom like a stone.

I went home. In the entryway, the burnt-out candle sputtered on a wooden plate, and my Cossack, against orders, was fast asleep, holding his gun in both hands. I let him sleep, took the candle, and went into the hut. Alas! My cashbox, my silver-chased saber, my Daghestan dagger—the gift of a friend—all were gone! Then I realized what the cursed blind boy had been carrying. I shook the Cossack roughly, woke him, scolded him, and lost my temper. But what good did that do? And wouldn't it have been ridiculous to complain to the authorities that a

blind boy had robbed me and an eighteen-year-old girl had nearly drowned me?

Thank heaven, a chance to leave came the next morning, and I left Taman.

I don't know what became of the old woman and the poor blind boy. Besides, what do other people's joys and sorrows matter to me—a traveling officer, and one with an order for government post horses?

Book 4

The Second Extract from Pechorin's Diary

THE FATALIST

I once happened to spend a couple of weeks in a Cossack village on our left flank. An infantry battalion was stationed there, and the officers had a custom of taking turns hosting one another to play cards in the evening.

Once, at Major S——'s quarters, we found our game of Boston too dull, tossed the cards under the table, and sat talking for a long time. For once, the conversation was interesting. The subject was the Muslim belief that a man's fate is written in heaven, and we discussed how many people, even among our own countrymen, were coming to believe it. Each of us told stories of unusual events that seemed to support or challenge the belief.

"What you've said, gentlemen, proves nothing," the old major said. "I assume not one of you actually witnessed the strange events you're citing to support your views?"

"Not one, of course," several guests said. "But we've heard about them from trustworthy people."...

"It's all nonsense!" someone said. "Who are these trustworthy people who've seen the Register where the appointed time of our death is recorded?... And if our fate is truly predetermined, why were we given free will and reason? Why must we answer for our actions?"

At that moment, an officer sitting in a corner stood up, walked slowly to the table, and surveyed us all with a calm, solemn look. He was from Serbia, as his name made clear.

Lieutenant Vulich's appearance matched his character. His height, dark complexion, black hair, piercing black eyes, large but straight nose—a feature of his people—and the cold, melancholy smile that always hovered around his lips all seemed to mark him as a man apart, incapable of sharing the thoughts and passions of those fate had made his companions.

He was brave and spoke little, but sharply; he confided his thoughts and family secrets to no one, drank hardly any wine, and never pursued the young Cossack women, whose charms are hard to understand unless you've seen them. It was said, though, that the colonel's wife was not indifferent to his expressive eyes. But Vulich became seriously angry if anyone hinted at it.

There was only one passion he did not hide: gambling. At the green table, he forgot everything else. He usually lost, but his constant bad luck only made him more stubborn. It was said that once, during a night expedition, he was acting as banker with the pot on a pillow and was having an incredible run of luck. Suddenly, shots rang out. The alarm was raised; everyone except Vulich jumped up and rushed to arms.

"Bet everything—name your card!" he cried to one of the most passionate gamblers.

"Seven," the man replied as he hurried off.

Despite the general confusion, Vulich calmly finished the deal: the card was a seven. By the time he reached the outpost, a fierce exchange of fire was underway. Vulich paid no attention to the bullets or the Chechens' sabers; he was looking for the lucky gambler.

"It was seven!" he shouted when at last he spotted the man among the skirmishers, who were beginning to drive the enemy out of the woods. Going up to him, Vulich took out his

purse and wallet and handed them to the winner, despite the man's objections that it was inconvenient to collect the money then. Once that unpleasant duty was done, Vulich charged forward, carried the soldiers along with him, and fought the Chechens with complete composure until the very end.

When Lieutenant Vulich came to the table, we all fell silent, expecting to hear something original from him, as usual.

"Gentlemen!" he said, his voice quiet but lower than usual. "Gentlemen, what good are these pointless discussions? You want proof? I propose we test it on ourselves: can a man choose to end his own life, or is each of us assigned our fatal moment in advance? Who's willing?"

"Not I. Not I," came the answer from all sides.

"What a strange fellow! He does come up with the strangest ideas!"

"I propose a wager," I said jokingly.

"What kind of wager?"

"I maintain that there is no such thing as predestination," I said, scattering a score or so of ducats—all I had in my pocket—onto the table.

"Done," Vulich answered in a hollow voice. "Major, you'll be the judge. Here are fifteen ducats; you owe me the other five, so please add them to the rest."

"Very well," said the major. "Though, really, I don't understand what the question is or how you'll decide it!"

Without a word, Vulich went into the major's bedroom, and we followed him. He went to the wall where the major's weapons hung and randomly took down one of the pistols—there were several, of different calibers. We still had no idea what he meant to do. But when he cocked the pistol and primed the pan with powder, several officers cried out despite themselves and grabbed him by the arms.

"What are you going to do?" they exclaimed. "This is madness!"

"Gentlemen!" he said slowly, freeing his arm. "Who would like to pay twenty ducats for me?"

They were silent and backed away.

Vulich went into the other room and sat down at the table; we all followed him. He gestured for us to sit around him. We obeyed in silence—at that moment he had gained a certain mysterious authority over us. I stared fixedly at his face, but he met my searching gaze with a calm, steady look, and his pale lips smiled. Yet, despite his composure, I thought I could read the mark of death on his pale face. I have noticed—and many old soldiers have confirmed my observation—that a man who is going to die within a few hours often bears a strange mark of inevitable fate on his face, so that even experienced observers are unlikely to be mistaken.

"You'll die today!" I said to Vulich.

He turned toward me quickly, but answered slowly and quietly:

"Maybe so, maybe not."...

Then, turning to the major, he asked:

"Is the pistol loaded?"

In the confusion, the major couldn't quite remember.

"All right, that's enough, Vulich!" someone exclaimed. "Of course it must be loaded if it was one of those hanging on the wall above our heads. What a joker you are!"

"And a stupid joke, too!" another chimed in.

"I'll bet fifty rubles to five that the pistol isn't loaded!" a third cried.

Another bet was made.

I was beginning to get tired of it all.

"Listen," I said, "either shoot yourself or put the pistol back and let us go to bed."

"Yes, of course!" several people exclaimed. "Let's go to bed."

"Gentlemen, please don't move," said Vulich, putting the pistol's muzzle to his forehead.

We were all paralyzed.

"Mr. Pechorin," he added, "take a card and toss it into the air."

I took an ace of hearts from the table, as I remember now, and tossed it into the air. Everyone held their breath. Their eyes full of terror and a certain vague curiosity, they glanced quickly from the pistol to the fateful ace, which slowly descended, trembling in the air. The moment it touched the table, Vulich pulled the trigger... a flash in the pan!

"Thank God!" several people exclaimed. "It wasn't loaded!"

"Let's see, though," said Vulich.

He cocked the pistol again and aimed at a forage cap hanging above the window. A shot rang out. Smoke filled the room; when it cleared, the forage cap was taken down. It had been shot through the center, and the bullet was deeply embedded in the wall.

For two or three minutes, no one could say a word. Very quietly, Vulich poured my ducats from the major's purse into his own.

People began discussing why the pistol hadn't gone off the first time. Some said the pan had probably been blocked; others whispered that the powder had been damp at first, and that afterward Vulich had put fresh powder in it. But I maintained that this last explanation was wrong, because I hadn't taken my eyes off the pistol once.

"You're lucky at cards!" I said to Vulich...

"For the first time in my life!" he answered with a pleased smile. "It's better than 'bank' and 'shtoss.'"

"But, on the other hand, a little more dangerous!"

"Well? Have you begun to believe in predestination?"

"I do believe in it; I just can't understand why it seemed to me that you were bound to die today!"

And this same man, who only a short time earlier had calmly aimed a pistol at his own forehead, now suddenly flared up and became embarrassed.

"That's enough!" he said, getting to his feet. "Our wager is over, and your observations seem out of place now."

He picked up his cap and left. The whole affair seemed strange to me—and with good reason. Soon afterward, all the officers broke up and went home, discussing Vulich's antics from different points of view and, doubtless, all calling me an egoist for betting against a man who wanted to shoot himself, as if he couldn't have found a convenient opportunity without my intervention.

I returned home by the village's deserted back streets. The moon, full and red like the glow of a fire, was beginning to rise behind the jagged horizon of the rooftops; the stars shone calmly in the deep blue vault of the sky. I was struck by how absurd the idea was when I recalled that once there had been exceedingly wise people who believed the stars in heaven took part in our insignificant quarrels over a piece of land or some other imaginary rights. And what then? These lights, which they fancied were lit only to illuminate their battles and triumphs, are still burning as brightly as ever, while those wise men themselves, along with their hopes and passions, have long since gone out, like a little fire carelessly kindled by a traveler at the edge of a forest! But, on the other hand, how much strength of will their conviction gave them—that all of heaven, with its innumerable inhabitants, watched them with sympathy, unchanging though silent!... And we, their wretched descendants, roaming the earth without faith, pride, pleasure, or fear—except for that involuntary dread that makes the heart shrink at the thought of the inevitable end—we are no longer capable of great sacrifices, either for the good of humanity or even for our own happiness, because we know such happiness is impossible. And just as our ancestors used to leap from one

delusion to another, we pass indifferently from doubt to doubt, without possessing, as they did, either hope or even that vague yet keen pleasure the soul finds in every struggle with humanity or with fate.

These and many other similar thoughts passed through my mind, but I didn't pursue them, because I don't like dwelling on abstract ideas—for what do they lead to? In my early youth I was a dreamer; I loved to hold close the images—sometimes gloomy, sometimes rainbow-colored—that my restless, eager imagination conjured up for me. And what have I kept from all of that? Only the kind of weariness one might feel after fighting a phantom by night—only a confused memory full of regrets. In that futile struggle I exhausted the warmth of soul and firmness of will needed for an active life. I entered that life after I had already lived it in my imagination, and it became tiresome and nauseating to me, like reading a bad imitation of a book when you have long been familiar with the original.

The events of that evening made a deep impression on me and stirred my nerves. I don't know for certain whether I believe in predestination now, but that evening I believed in it firmly. The proof was startling, and despite having laughed at our ancestors and their accommodating astrology, I involuntarily fell into their way of thinking. Still, I stopped myself in time from following that dangerous path. Since I've made it a rule neither to reject anything outright nor to trust anything blindly, I set metaphysics aside and began watching where I was going. The precaution came just in time. I nearly tripped over something thick and soft, but apparently lifeless. I bent down to see what it was and, in the moonlight now shining directly on the road, saw a pig that had been cut in two with a saber... I had barely had time to examine it when I heard footsteps, and two Cossacks came running out of a side street. One of them came up to me and asked if I'd seen a drunken Cossack

chasing a pig. I told him I hadn't met the Cossack and pointed to the unfortunate victim of his wild bravery.

"The scoundrel!" said the second Cossack. "As soon as he drinks his fill of chikhir he goes off and cuts up anything in his way. Let's go after him, Eremeich. We have to tie him up, or else"...

They went off, and I continued on my way more cautiously. At last I reached my lodgings without incident.

I was staying with an old Cossack noncommissioned officer whom I liked, not only for his kind nature but especially for his pretty daughter, Nastya.

Wrapped in a sheepskin coat, she was waiting for me, as usual, by the gate. The moon lit her charming little lips, now blue with the cold night air. She recognized me and smiled, but I wasn't in the mood to linger with her.

"Good night, Nastya!" I said, and went on.

She started to answer, but only sighed.

I shut the door of my room behind me, lit a candle, and threw myself onto the bed. But that night, sleep took longer than usual to arrive. By the time I fell asleep, the east was beginning to grow pale. Evidently, though, I was fated not to sleep through the night. At four in the morning, two fists pounded on my window. I sprang up.

"What's the matter?"

"Get up—get dressed!"

I dressed quickly and went out.

"Do you know what's happened?" asked the three officers who had come for me, all speaking at once.

They were deathly pale.

"No. What happened?"

"Vulich has been murdered!"

I was stunned.

"Yes, murdered!" they went on. "Let's not waste time. Come!"

"But where?"

"You'll find out on the way."

We set off. They told me what had happened, adding various comments about the strange predestination that had saved Vulich from imminent death half an hour before he actually met his end.

Vulich had been walking alone along a dark street when the drunken Cossack who had cut up the pig suddenly came at him. He might have passed by without noticing Vulich, if Vulich hadn't stopped suddenly and said:

"Who are you looking for, my man?"

"You!" the Cossack answered, striking him with his saber. He slashed him from the shoulder almost to the heart...

The two Cossacks who had met me and followed the murderer arrived and lifted the wounded man from the ground. But he was already at his last breath and said only these three words—"he was right!"

I alone understood the dark meaning of those words: they referred to me. I had involuntarily foretold poor Vulich's fate. My instinct hadn't deceived me: I really had read the signs of approaching death in his changed expression.

The murderer had locked himself in an empty hut at the edge of the village, and we headed there. A number of women, all weeping, ran in the same direction. At times a Cossack who'd been slow to arrive, hurriedly buckling on his dagger, sprang into the street and ran to catch up with us. The uproar was dreadful.

At last we arrived and found a crowd gathered around the hut, whose door and shutters were locked from the inside. Groups of officers and Cossacks argued heatedly; the women shrieked, wailed, and talked all at once. One old woman caught my attention with her meaningful looks and the frantic despair on her face. She sat on a thick plank, her elbows on her knees and her head supported in her hands. She was the murderer's

mother. At times her lips moved... Was it a prayer they were whispering, or a curse?

Meanwhile, we had to decide what to do and capture the criminal. But no one dared to be the first to rush forward.

I went to the window and peered through a crack in the shutter. The criminal, pale-faced, lay on the floor with a pistol in his right hand. His bloodstained saber lay beside him. His expressive eyes darted about in terror; now and then he shuddered and clutched his head, as if dimly recalling the events of the night before. I couldn't see any sign of firm resolve in his troubled gaze, so I told the major it would be better to order the Cossacks to break down the door and rush in at once than to wait until the murderer had fully recovered his senses.

At that moment the old Cossack captain went to the door and called the murderer by name. The man answered.

"You've sinned, brother Ephimych!" said the captain. "All you can do now is surrender."

"I won't surrender!" the Cossack answered.

"Have you no fear of God? You're not one of those cursed Chechens, but an honest Christian! Come now, if you did it in a moment of madness, it can't be helped! You can't escape your fate!"

"I won't surrender!" the Cossack shouted threateningly, and we heard the click of the hammer being cocked.

"Hey, good woman!" the Cossack captain said to the old woman. "Say something to your son—maybe he'll listen to you... You see, carrying on like this will only anger God. And look, the gentlemen here have already been waiting two hours."

The old woman stared at him and shook her head.

"Vasili Petrovich," the captain said, going up to the major, "he won't surrender. I know him! If we break down the door, he'll strike down several of our men. Wouldn't it be better to order him shot? There's a wide crack in the shutter."

At that moment a strange idea flashed through my mind—I decided, like Vulich, to put fate to the test.

"Wait," I said to the major. "I'll take him alive."

I told the captain to keep the murderer talking and stationed three Cossacks at the door, ready to force it open and rush to my aid at a signal. Then I walked around the hut and approached the fatal window. My heart was pounding.

"Aha, you cursed wretch!" the captain cried. "Are you laughing at us, eh? Or do you think we can't get the better of you?"

He began pounding on the door with all his might. I put my eye to the crack and watched the Cossack, who wasn't expecting an attack from that direction. I suddenly pulled the shutter aside and threw myself headfirst through the window. A shot rang out right over my ear, and the bullet tore off one of my epaulettes. But the smoke filling the room kept my opponent from finding the saber lying beside him. I grabbed him by the arms. The Cossacks burst in, and within three minutes they had bound the criminal and led him away under guard.

The people dispersed, and the officers congratulated me—and with good reason.

After all that, it would hardly seem possible not to become a fatalist. But who knows for certain whether he believes anything or not? And how often is a deception of the senses or an error of reason accepted as a conviction!... I prefer to doubt everything. Such a disposition is no obstacle to firmness of character; on the contrary, as far as I'm concerned, I always move forward more boldly when I don't know what awaits me. You see, nothing worse than death can happen—and death is unavoidable.

When I returned to the fortress, I told Maksim Maksimych everything I had seen and experienced, then tried to learn what he thought about predestination.

At first he didn't understand the word. I explained it as best I could, and then he said, shaking his head meaningfully:

"Yes, sir, of course! It was a very clever trick! But these Asiatic pistols often misfire if they're badly oiled or if you don't press the trigger hard enough. I confess I don't like Circassian carbines either. Somehow, they don't suit people like us: the butt is so small, and any moment you might burn your nose! Their sabres, on the other hand—well, all I need to say is, my compliments to them!"

After thinking it over a little, he added:

"Yes, it's a pity about the poor fellow! The devil must have put it into his head to start talking to a drunk man at night! Still, it's clear that fate had written it that way at his birth!"

I couldn't get anything more out of Maksim Maksimych. Generally speaking, he had no taste for metaphysical arguments.

Book 5

The Third Extract from Pechorin's Diary

PRINCESS MARY

Chapter 12

May 11

YESTERDAY I ARRIVED IN PYATIGORSK. I've rented a place at the very edge of town, up high, at the foot of Mount Mashuk. During a storm, the clouds will settle on the roof of my house.

This morning at five o'clock, when I opened my window, the room filled with the fragrance of flowers growing in the modest little front garden. Branches of bird-cherry trees heavy with blossoms lean in through my window, and now and then the breeze scatters their white petals across my writing table. The view before me in three directions is wonderful: to the west rises five-peaked Beshtau, blue as "the last cloud of a dispersed storm," and to the north rises Mashuk, like a shaggy Persian cap, enclosing that whole quarter of the horizon. To the east, the view is more cheerful: below lies the little town, newly built and spotless, displaying all its varied colors, with its murmuring, health-giving springs and its babbling, many-voiced crowd. Farther off, the mountains rise like an amphitheater, growing bluer and hazier; and on the horizon stretches the silver chain of snow-covered peaks, beginning with Kazbek and ending with two-peaked Elbruz... Life is joyful in a land like this! A feeling close to rapture flows through my veins. The air is pure and fresh, like a child's kiss; the sun is bright, the sky is blue—what more could anyone

want? In a place like this, what need is there for passions, desires, regrets?

Still, it's time to get moving. I'll go to the Elizaveta spring —I'm told that the whole crowd at the resort gathers there in the morning.

Going down to the middle of town, I walked along the boulevard, where I met a few melancholy groups slowly climbing the mountain. Most were families of landowners from the steppes—as you could tell at once from the husbands' threadbare, old-fashioned frock coats and the exquisite clothes of their wives and daughters. They had evidently already sized up all the young men at the resort, because they looked at me with tender curiosity. The cut of my coat, in the Petersburg style, misled them; but they soon recognized my military epaulettes and turned away indignantly.

The wives of local officials—the hostesses, so to speak, of the resort—were more welcoming. They carry lorgnettes and pay less attention to a uniform. In the Caucasus, they've grown used to finding a passionate heart beneath a numbered button and a cultivated mind under a white forage cap. These ladies are very charming, and remain so for a long time. Each year they trade in their admirers for new ones, and perhaps that's the secret of their unfailing good humor.

Taking the narrow path up to the Elizaveta spring, I caught up with a crowd of officials and military men who, as I later learned, make up a class of their own among those who come hoping for cures from the medicinal waters. They drink—but not water—take few walks, indulge only in mild flirtations, gamble, and complain of boredom.

They are dandies. As they lower their wicker-covered tumblers into the sulfur-water well, they strike academic poses. The officials wear bright blue cravats; the military men have

ruffs sticking out above their collars. They affect deep contempt for provincial ladies and sigh for the aristocratic drawing rooms of the capitals, where they aren't welcome.

At last, here is the well!... A little bathhouse with a red roof stands on the small square beside it, and a little farther on there's a gallery where people walk when it rains. Some wounded officers sat on a bench, pale and melancholy, with their crutches drawn up. A few ladies, having finished their tumblers of water, walked briskly back and forth around the square. There were two or three pretty faces among them. Beneath the vine-covered avenues on the slope of Mashuk, now and then you could catch a glimpse of the brightly colored hat of someone looking for solitude for two—for beside that hat I always noticed either a military forage cap or a civilian's ugly round hat. On the steep cliff, where the pavilion called "The Aeolian Harp" stands, sightseers were pointing their telescopes at Elbruz. Among them were a couple of tutors with their pupils, who had come to be treated for scrofula.

Out of breath, I stopped at the edge of the mountain and leaned against the corner of a little house to take in the picturesque view. Suddenly, I heard a familiar voice behind me.

"Pechorin! Have you been here long?"

I turned around. Grushnitski! We embraced. I'd met him in the active-service detachment. He'd been wounded in the foot by a bullet and had come to the springs a week or so before me.

Grushnitski is a cadet; he's been in the service only a year. In a kind of foppish affectation peculiar to him, he wears the heavy cloak of a common soldier. He also has the soldier's Cross of St. George. He is well built, swarthy, and black-haired. You'd take him for a twenty-five-year-old, though he's barely twenty-one. He tosses his head as he speaks and keeps twirling his mustache with his left hand, while his right is occupied with the crutch he leans on. He speaks quickly and affectedly; he's one of those people who always have a grand-sounding phrase

ready for every occasion, who remain unmoved by simple beauty, and who wrap themselves in grand fashion in extraordinary feelings, exalted passions, and exceptional sufferings. They delight in making an impression and have an almost irrational fondness for romantic provincial ladies. As they grow old, they become either peaceful landowners or drunkards—sometimes both. They often have many good qualities, but not a grain of poetry in them. Grushnitski's passion was declamation. The moment a conversation strayed beyond ordinary ideas, he would drown you in words. I've never been able to argue with him. He neither answers your questions nor listens to you. As soon as you stop, he launches into a lengthy tirade that seems in some way connected to what you've said, but is really just a continuation of his own harangue.

He's witty enough; his epigrams are often amusing, but never malicious or to the point. He never kills anyone with a single word; he knows nothing about people or their weaknesses, because all his life he has been interested in no one but himself. His goal is to make himself the hero of a novel. He has tried so often to convince others that he's a being not made for this world and destined for some mysterious suffering that he has almost convinced himself it's true. That's why he wears his heavy soldier's cloak with such pride. I've seen through him, and he dislikes me for it, though on the surface we're on the friendliest terms. Grushnitski is considered a man of remarkable courage. I've seen him in action. He waves his sabre, shouts, and charges forward with his eyes shut. I wouldn't call that Russian courage!...

I return Grushnitski's dislike. I feel that sooner or later we'll meet on a narrow road, and one of us will come off badly.

His arrival in the Caucasus is also the result of his romantic fanaticism. I'm convinced that, on the eve of his departure from his ancestral village, he said gloomily to some pretty neighbor that he was going away, not so much simply to serve in the

army as to seek death, because... and at that point, I'm sure, he covered his eyes with his hand and went on: "No, you—or thou—mustn't know! Your pure soul would shudder! And what good would it do? What am I to you? Could you understand me?"... and so on.

He once told me that the reason he had joined the K—— Regiment must remain a secret between him and Heaven forever.

Still, when he sets aside his tragic air, Grushnitski is charming and entertaining enough. I always enjoy watching him with women—that's when he puts on his finest performance, I think!

We greeted each other like old friends. I began asking him about the notable people and the kind of life at the springs.

"Life here is rather dull," he said with a sigh. "Those who drink the waters in the morning are sluggish—like all invalids; those who drink wine in the evening are unbearable—like all healthy people! There are ladies who entertain, but they offer little amusement. They play whist, dress badly, and speak French terribly! The only people from Moscow here this year are Princess Ligovski and her daughter, but I don't know them. My soldier's cloak is like a badge of renunciation. The sympathy it arouses is as painful as charity."

Just then two ladies passed us on their way to the well, one elderly, the other young and slender. Their hats kept me from getting a good look at their faces, but they were dressed with the strictest good taste—nothing superfluous. The younger woman wore a high-necked pearl-gray dress, and a light silk scarf was wrapped around her graceful neck. Her slim ankle looked so charming in its plum-colored boot that even someone with no eye for beauty would surely have sighed, if only in wonder. Her easy yet aristocratic walk had something girlish about it, something hard to define but easy to recognize. As she passed us, an indescribable fragrance drifted from her, like

the scent that sometimes seems to rise from a charming woman's note.

"Look!" said Grushnitski. "That's Princess Ligovski with her daughter Mary, as she calls her in the English fashion. They've been here only three days."

"You already know her name, though?"

"Yes, I heard it by chance," he replied, blushing. "I admit I have no wish to meet them. Those haughty aristocrats look at us army men as if we were savages. What do they care if there's a mind beneath a numbered forage cap and a heart beneath a thick cloak?"

"Poor cloak!" I said with a laugh. "But who's that gentleman going up to them and handing them a glass so officiously?"

"Oh, that's Raevich, the Moscow dandy. He's a gambler—you can tell at once from that enormous gold chain coiled across his sky-blue waistcoat. And what a thick cane! Just like Robinson Crusoe's—and his beard is, too, and his hair is done like a peasant's."

"Are you embittered against the whole human race?"

"And with good reason..."

"Oh, really?"

Just then the ladies left the well and came toward us. Grushnitski managed, with the help of his crutch, to strike a dramatic pose, then answered me loudly in French:

"My dear, I hate people so I won't despise them; otherwise life would be too disgusting a farce."

The pretty Princess Mary turned and gave the speaker a long, curious look. Her expression was hard to read, but it wasn't contemptuous—a fact for which I inwardly congratulated Grushnitski with all my heart.

"She's an extremely pretty girl," I said. "She has such velvety eyes—yes, velvet is the word. I'd advise you to borrow that expression when you talk about her eyes. Her upper and lower lashes are so long that sunlight can't reflect in her pupils. I love

those eyes without a glint; they're so soft they seem to caress you. Still, her eyes seem to be her only good feature... Tell me, are her teeth white? That's very important! It's a pity she didn't smile at your lofty phrase."

"You talk about a pretty woman as if she were an English horse," Grushnitski said indignantly.

"My dear," I replied, trying to imitate his tone, "I despise women so I won't love them; otherwise life would be a melodrama too ridiculous to bear."

I turned and left him. For about half an hour I wandered along the paths among the vines, limestone cliffs, and bushes that hung between them. The day grew hot, and I hurried home. Passing the sulfur spring, I stopped at the covered gallery to catch my breath in the shade. That gave me the chance to witness a rather interesting scene. Here is how the characters were arranged: Princess Ligovski and the Moscow dandy sat on a bench in the covered gallery, apparently deep in conversation. Princess Mary, who had doubtless finished her last glass by then, was walking thoughtfully back and forth by the well. Grushnitski stood beside the well itself; no one else was in the square.

I went closer and hid behind a corner of the gallery. Just then Grushnitski dropped his glass onto the sand and made a desperate effort to bend down and pick it up, but his injured foot kept him from doing so. Poor fellow! He tried every trick he could think of as he leaned on his crutch, all in vain. His expressive face was a picture of suffering.

Princess Mary had a better view of the whole scene than I did.

She sprang toward him as lightly as a bird, bent down, picked up the glass, and handed it to him with ineffable charm. Then she blushed deeply, glanced around the gallery, and, seeing that her mother apparently hadn't noticed, immediately recovered her composure. By the time Grushnitski opened his

mouth to thank her, she was far away. A moment later she came out of the gallery with her mother and the dandy, but as she passed Grushnitski she put on a perfectly decorous, serious expression. She didn't even turn around; she didn't even notice the passionate gaze he fixed on her for a long time, until she had gone down the hill and disappeared behind the lime trees along the boulevard... Soon I caught glimpses of her hat as she walked down the street. She hurried through the gate of one of the finest houses in Pyatigorsk; her mother followed and bowed goodbye to Raevich at the gate.

Only then did the poor, lovesick cadet notice me.

"Did you see?" he said, squeezing my hand. "She's an angel, simply an angel!"

"Why?" I asked with the utmost innocence.

"You didn't see it, then?"

"No. I saw her pick up your glass. An attendant would have done the same—and faster, too, in hopes of a tip. It's easy enough to see she felt sorry for you; you made such a terrible grimace when you stepped on your injured foot."

"And when you saw her, as you did, at that moment when her soul shone in her eyes, were you not moved at all?"

"No."

I was lying, but I wanted to provoke him. I have an inborn taste for contradiction—my whole life has been one long series of sad, futile conflicts between heart and reason. An enthusiast's presence chills me like a cold snap on Twelfth Night, and I believe that constant company with someone of a limp, phlegmatic temperament would have made me an impassioned dreamer. I'll also admit that, just then, an unpleasant but familiar feeling was moving lightly through my heart. It was envy. I say "envy" without hesitation because I'm used to admitting everything to myself. It would be hard to find a young man—one, of course, who lives in high society and is accustomed to indulging his self-love—who wouldn't be

unpleasantly taken aback if his idle fancy had been caught by a pretty woman and he suddenly saw her openly single out, right before his eyes, another man who was just as much a stranger to her.

In silence, Grushnitski and I went down the hill and walked along the boulevard, past the windows of the house where our beauty had taken refuge. She was sitting by the window. Grushnitski tugged at my arm and cast her one of those gloomily tender looks that have so little effect on women. I raised my lorgnette toward her and saw that she smiled at his glance, while my insolent lorgnette made her downright angry. And how, indeed, could an officer serving in the Caucasus presume to point his eyeglass at a princess from Moscow?...

Chapter 13

May 13

THIS MORNING THE DOCTOR CAME to see me. His name is Werner, but he's Russian. What's so surprising about that? I once knew a man named Ivanov who was German.

Werner is a remarkable man for many reasons. Like almost all doctors, he is a skeptic and a materialist, but at the same time he is a genuine poet—a poet in his actions always and often in his words, though he has never written two lines of verse in his life. He has mastered every living chord of the human heart, just as one learns the veins of a corpse, but he has never known how to use that knowledge. In the same way, an excellent anatomist sometimes does not know how to cure a fever. Werner usually made fun of his patients in private, but once I saw him weeping over a dying soldier... He was poor and dreamed of millions, yet he would not go out of his way even one step for the sake of money. He once told me that he would rather do a favor for an enemy than for a friend, because in the latter case it would mean selling his kindness, while hatred only grows in proportion to an adversary's magnanimity. He had a malicious tongue, and more than one good, simple soul gained a reputation as a vulgar fool after being tagged with one of his epigrams. His rivals, envious doctors at the spa, spread the rumor that he was in the habit of drawing caricatures of his patients. The patients were incensed, and almost all of them abandoned him. His friends—that is, all the genuinely well-

bred people serving in the Caucasus—tried in vain to restore his fallen reputation.

At first glance, his appearance was the sort that made an unpleasant impression, but over time you came to like it, as your eye learned to read in his irregular features the mark of a tested and lofty soul. There have been cases of women falling madly in love with men like that, with no desire to trade their ugliness for the beauty of the freshest, rosiest Endymion. We must give women their due: they have an instinct for spiritual beauty, which may be why men like Werner love women so passionately.

Werner was short and thin, and as weak as a baby. One leg was shorter than the other, as Byron's was. Compared with his body, his head seemed enormous. His hair was cropped close, and the uneven contours of his skull, now exposed, would have struck a phrenologist because of their strange mixture of contradictory tendencies. His little, constantly restless black eyes seemed to be trying to fathom your thoughts. His clothes showed taste and neatness. His small, thin, sinewy hands showed off bright yellow gloves. His frock coat, cravat, and waistcoat were always black. The young men called him Mephistopheles; he pretended to be angry at the nickname, but in reality it flattered his vanity. Werner and I soon understood each other and became friends, because I, for my part, am ill-suited to friendship. Of two friends, one is always the other's slave, though often neither admits it to himself. I could not be the slave; and being the master would be a tiresome burden, because it would also require deceit. Besides, I have servants and money!

Our friendship began under these circumstances. I met Werner at S——, in the middle of a large, noisy gathering of young people. Toward the end of the evening, the conversation turned philosophical and metaphysical. We discussed convictions, and each of us had a different one to declare.

"As for me," the doctor said, "I am convinced of only one thing"...

"And that is—?" I asked, eager to learn the opinion of a man who had been silent until then.

"The fact," he replied, "that sooner or later, one fine morning, I shall die."

"I'm better off than you," I said. "Besides that, I have another conviction: that one very nasty evening, I had the misfortune to be born."

Everyone else thought we were talking nonsense, but not one of them said anything more sensible. From then on, we singled each other out in the crowd. We often met and discussed abstract subjects with great seriousness, until each of us noticed that the other was pulling the wool over his eyes. Then we would look meaningfully at each other—as, according to Cicero, the Roman augurs used to do—burst out laughing, and, once we had finished, part ways, quite content with our evening.

I was lying on a couch, staring at the ceiling with my hands clasped behind my head, when Werner came into my room. He sat in an armchair, put his cane in a corner, yawned, and announced that it was getting hot outside. I replied that the flies were bothering me, and we both fell silent.

"Consider, my dear doctor, that without fools the world would be a very dull place. Look at us: here we are, two sensible men! We know in advance that it's possible to argue endlessly about anything—and so we don't argue. Each of us knows almost all the other's secret thoughts: to us, a single word is a whole history; we see the grain of every feeling through a triple husk. We laugh at what is sad and grieve at what is laughable; but, to tell the truth, generally speaking we are fairly indifferent to everything except ourselves. Consequently, we cannot exchange feelings and thoughts: each of us

knows all he wants to know about the other, and that knowledge is all he wants. One option remains—to tell each other the news. So tell me some news."

Tired by this long speech, I closed my eyes and yawned. The doctor answered after a moment's thought:

"There is an idea in that nonsense of yours, after all."

"Two," I replied.

"Tell me one, and I'll tell you the other."

"All right, go ahead!" I said, continuing to stare at the ceiling and smile to myself.

"You're eager to hear about some of the newcomers here, and I can guess who you mean, because they've already been asking about you."

"Doctor! It's absolutely impossible for us to have a conversation! We can read each other's souls."

"And the other idea?"...

"Here it is: I wanted to get you to tell me something for the following reasons. First, listening is less tiring than talking. Second, the listener cannot commit himself. Third, he can learn someone else's secret. Fourth, sensible people like you prefer listeners to speakers. Now, to business: what did Princess Ligovski tell you about me?"

"You're quite sure it was Princess Ligovski... and not Princess Mary?"...

"Quite sure."

"Why?"

"Because Princess Mary asked about Grushnitski."

"You have a fine imagination! Princess Mary said she was convinced that the young man in the soldier's cloak had been demoted because of a duel"...

"I hope you left her with that pleasant delusion"...

"Of course"...

"A plot!" I exclaimed with delight. "We'll make it our business to see how this little comedy ends. It's obvious fate is making sure I won't be bored!"

"I have a presentiment," the doctor said, "that poor Grushnitski will be your victim."

"Go on, doctor."

"Princess Ligovski said your face looked familiar to her. I remarked that she had probably met you in Petersburg, somewhere in society... I told her your name. She knew it well. Apparently, your story caused a great stir there... She began telling us about your adventures, probably adding her own observations to society gossip... Her daughter listened with curiosity. In her imagination, you have become the hero of a new kind of novel... I did not contradict Princess Ligovski, although I knew she was talking nonsense."

"My worthy friend!" I said, holding out my hand to him.

The doctor pressed it warmly and continued:

"If you like, I'll introduce you"...

"Good heavens!" I said, clapping my hands. "Are heroes ever introduced? They meet the women they love only by saving them from certain death!"...

"And do you really want to court Princess Mary?"

"Not at all, far from it!... Doctor, at last I've triumphed! You don't understand me!... It vexes me, though," I continued after a moment's silence. "I never reveal my secrets myself, but I'm very fond of having them guessed, because then I can always deny them when it suits me. Still, you must describe both mother and daughter to me. What sort of people are they?"

"First of all, Princess Ligovski is a woman of forty-five," Werner replied. "She has excellent digestion, but her blood is out of order—there are red spots on her cheeks. She spent the latter half of her life in Moscow and grew stout from living an inactive life there. She likes spicy stories and sometimes says improper things herself when her daughter is out of the room.

She told me her daughter is as innocent as a dove. What do I care?... I was going to say that she needn't worry, because I would never tell anyone. Princess Ligovski is taking the waters for her rheumatism, and her daughter, goodness knows for what. I've ordered each of them to drink two glasses a day of sulphur water and to bathe twice a week in the diluted bath. Princess Ligovski apparently isn't used to giving orders. She respects her daughter's intelligence and accomplishments; the girl has read Byron in English and knows algebra. Evidently, Moscow ladies have taken up the pursuit of learning—and good for them! The men here are generally so disagreeable that it must be intolerable for a clever woman to flirt with them. Princess Ligovski is very fond of young people; Princess Mary regards them with a certain contempt—a Moscow habit! In Moscow, they admire only men of wit who are at least forty."

"Have you been in Moscow, doctor?"

"Yes, I practiced there."

"Go on."

"But I think I've told you everything... No, there's something else: Princess Mary, it seems, likes to discuss feelings, passions, and so on. She spent one winter in Petersburg and disliked it—especially the society. No doubt she wasn't warmly received."

"Didn't you see anyone with them today?"

"On the contrary, there was an aide-de-camp, a stiff guardsman, and a lady—one of the latest arrivals, a relative of Princess Ligovski on her husband's side. Very pretty, but apparently very ill... Haven't you met her at the well? She's of medium height, fair, with regular features; she has the complexion of someone with consumption, and a little black mole on her right cheek. I was struck by how expressive her face was."

"A mole!" I muttered through my teeth. "Could it be?"

The doctor looked at me, laid his hand on my heart, and said triumphantly:

"You know her!"

My heart was, in fact, beating harder than usual.

"Now it's your turn to triumph," I said. "But I'm counting on you: you won't betray me. I haven't seen her yet, but I'm sure I recognize, from your description, a woman I loved long ago... Don't say a word to her about me; if she asks any questions, give her a bad impression of me."

"Very well!" Werner said, shrugging.

After he left, my heart was crushed by terrible grief. Has fate brought us together again in the Caucasus, or has she come here on purpose, knowing she would meet me?... And how will we meet?... And is it really her?... My instincts have never deceived me. No one in the world is as completely ruled by the past as I am. Every memory of old grief or joy affects my soul with a sickening force and draws out the same sounds... I am absurdly made: I forget nothing—nothing!

After dinner, around six, I went to the boulevard. It was crowded. The two princesses were sitting on a bench, surrounded by young men competing to pay them attention. I took a seat on another bench some distance away, stopped two Dragoon officers I knew, and began telling them a story. It must have been funny, because they started laughing loudly like a pair of madmen. Some of the young men around Princess Mary, drawn by curiosity, gradually left her and joined my group. I kept talking; my anecdotes were absurdly clever, and my jokes at the expense of the odd people passing by were vicious to the point of frenzy. I kept the crowd entertained until sunset. Princess Mary passed me several times, arm in arm with her mother and accompanied by a certain lame old man. A few times, as her gaze fell on me, it showed irritation, though she tried to look indifferent...

"What has he been telling you?" she asked one of the young men, who had returned to her out of politeness. "I suppose it was a most fascinating story—his own exploits in battle?"...

She said this rather loudly, probably intending to sting me.

"Aha!" I thought. "You're really angry, my dear Princess. Just wait; there's more to come."

Grushnitski followed her like a predator and wouldn't let her out of his sight. I bet that tomorrow he'll ask someone to introduce him to Princess Ligovski. She'll be glad, because she's bored.

Chapter 14

May 16

IN JUST TWO DAYS, my affairs have advanced tremendously. Princess Mary positively hates me. I've already heard two or three epigrams about myself—rather biting, but also very flattering. She finds it extremely strange that I, accustomed to good society and so close to her Petersburg cousins and aunts, haven't tried to make her acquaintance. We meet every day at the well and on the boulevard. I use all my skill to lure away her admirers—the glittering aides-de-camp, pale-faced visitors from Moscow, and others—and I almost always succeed. I've always hated entertaining guests; now my house is full every day. They dine, sup, gamble, and, alas, my champagne triumphs over the power of Princess Mary's magnetic eyes!

Yesterday I met her in Chelakhov's shop. She was bargaining for a beautiful Persian rug and begging her mother not to be stingy: the rug would be such an ornament to her boudoir... I outbid her by forty rubles and bought it out from under her. I was rewarded with a glance sparkling with the most delightful fury. Around dinnertime, I had my Circassian horse led past her windows, covered with that very rug. Werner was with the princesses at the time and told me the scene had a very dramatic effect. Princess Mary wants to launch a crusade against me, and I've even noticed that two of the aides-de-camp already greet me very coolly when they're in her company—though they dine with me every day.

Grushnitski has taken on an air of mystery; he walks with his arms folded behind his back and acknowledges no one. His foot has suddenly healed, and he barely limps. He found a chance to speak with Princess Ligovski and pay Princess Mary some sort of compliment. The latter is evidently not very particular, because ever since then she has answered his bow with a most charming smile.

"Are you sure you don't want to meet the Ligovskis?" he asked me yesterday.

"Absolutely."

"Good heavens! It's the nicest house at the springs! All the best society in Pyatigorsk goes there"...

"My friend, I'm terribly tired of any society, let alone Pyatigorsk's. So, do you visit the Ligovskis?"

"Not yet. I've spoken to Princess Mary once or twice, but that's all. You know, it's rather awkward to visit them without an invitation, though that's the custom here... It would be different if I were wearing epaulettes"...

"Good heavens! Why, you're far more interesting as you are! You just don't know how to make use of your advantage... Why, in the eyes of any sentimental lady, that soldier's cloak makes you a hero and a martyr!"

Grushnitski smiled smugly.

"Nonsense!" he said.

"I'm convinced," I went on, "that Princess Mary is already in love with you."

He blushed to the ears and looked pleased.

Oh, vanity! You are the lever with which Archimedes was supposed to lift the earth!...

"You're always joking!" he said, pretending to be angry. "For one thing, she hardly knows me yet"...

"Women love only those they don't know!"

"But I have no pretensions at all to pleasing her. I simply want to meet a pleasant family, and it would be ridiculous to

entertain the slightest hope... You're different, for instance! You conquerors from Petersburg! You only have to look—and women melt... But do you know what Princess Mary said about you, Pechorin?"...

"What? She's already talked to you about me?"...

"Don't rejoice too soon, though. The other day, by chance, I got into a conversation with her at the well; her third sentence was, 'Who is that gentleman with such an unpleasant, heavy look? He was with you when'... She blushed and didn't want to mention the day, remembering her own delightful little exploit. 'You don't need to tell me which day,' I answered. 'I'll always remember it!'... Pechorin, my friend, I can't congratulate you. You're in her bad books... And it's a pity, really, because Mary is a charming girl!"...

It should be noted that Grushnitski is one of those men who, when speaking about a woman they barely know, call her my Mary, my Sophie, if she has had the good fortune to please them.

I put on a serious expression and replied:

"Yes, she's good-looking... Just be careful, Grushnitski! Russian ladies, for the most part, want only platonic love, with no thought of marriage mixed in; and platonic love is terribly awkward. Princess Mary seems to be one of those women who want to be entertained. If she's bored with you for two minutes straight, you're lost for good. Your silence should make her curious, and your conversation should never satisfy that curiosity completely; you should keep her on edge every minute. Ten times, in public, she'll disregard what people think of her for your sake and call it a sacrifice, then torment you to make up for it. Afterward, she'll simply say she can't stand you. If you don't gain power over her, even her first kiss won't earn you a second. She'll flirt with you to her heart's content, and in two years she'll marry a monster because her mother tells her to. She'll convince herself she's unhappy, that she loved only

one man—that is, you—but Heaven wouldn't let her marry him because he wore a soldier's cloak, though beneath that thick gray cloak beat a passionate, noble heart"...

Grushnitski slammed his fist on the table and began pacing back and forth across the room.

I laughed to myself and even smiled once or twice, but fortunately he didn't notice. It's obvious he's in love, because he's become even more open than before. What's more, a ring has appeared on his finger, a silver ring with black enamel, made locally. It struck me as suspicious... I began to examine it, and what do you think I saw? The name Mary was engraved inside in small letters, and beside the name was the date she had picked up the famous tumbler. I kept my discovery to myself. I don't want to force a confession out of him; I want him to choose me as his confidant of his own accord—and then I'll enjoy myself!...

Today I got up late. I went to the well. Nobody was there. The day grew hot. White, shaggy clouds raced down from the snow-covered mountains, promising a thunderstorm; Mount Mashuk's summit smoked like a torch just put out. Gray wisps of cloud coiled and crept around it like snakes, halted in their rapid sweep and seemingly caught on its prickly brush. The air was charged with electricity. I entered the avenue of vines leading to the grotto.

I felt downcast. I was thinking of the lady with the little mole on her cheek, the one the doctor had told me about... "Why is she here?" I thought. "And is it her? What makes me think it is? And why am I so sure? Aren't there plenty of women with a mole on their cheek?" Thinking this way, I came right up to the grotto. I looked in and saw a woman in a straw hat, wrapped in a black shawl, sitting on a stone bench in the arch's cool shade. Her head was bowed over her chest, and the hat covered her face. I was just about to turn back so I wouldn't disturb her thoughts when she glanced at me.

"Vera!" I exclaimed involuntarily.

She started and turned pale.

"I knew you were here," she said.

I sat beside her and took her hand. At the sound of that dear voice, a long-forgotten tremor ran through my veins. She looked into my face with her deep, calm eyes. Her gaze showed mistrust and something like reproach.

"We haven't seen each other in a long time," I said.

"A long time, and we've both changed in many ways."

"So you don't love me anymore?"...

"I'm married!"... she said.

"Again? A few years ago, though, that was the case too, and yet"...

She pulled her hand away from mine, and her cheeks flamed.

"Perhaps you love your second husband?"...

She didn't answer and turned her head away.

"Or is he very jealous?"

She remained silent.

"Well, then? He's young, handsome, and, I suppose, rich—which is what matters most—and you're afraid?"...

I glanced at her and was alarmed. Her face showed profound despair; tears glistened in her eyes.

"Tell me," she whispered at last, "do you find it very amusing to torture me? I ought to hate you. Ever since we met, you've given me nothing but suffering"...

Her voice shook; she leaned toward me and let her head sink against my chest.

"Perhaps," I reflected, "that's exactly why you've loved me; joys are forgotten, but sorrows never are"...

I held her close to my chest, and we stayed that way for a long time. At last our lips drew together in a fervent, intoxicating kiss. Her hands were cold as ice; her head was burning.

Then we embarked on one of those conversations that make no sense on paper, that can't be repeated, and can't even be held in memory. The meaning of the sounds takes the place of and completes the meaning of the words, as in Italian opera.

She is quite opposed to my meeting her husband, the lame old man I'd caught a glimpse of on the boulevard. She married him for the sake of her son. He is rich and suffers from attacks of rheumatism. I didn't allow myself even one joke at his expense. She respects him as a father and will deceive him as a husband... The human heart is a strange thing in general, and a woman's heart in particular.

Vera's husband, Semyon Vasilevich G——v, is a distant relative of Princess Ligovski. He lives next door to her. Vera often visits the Princess. I've promised her I'll get to know the Ligovskis and court Princess Mary to distract attention from Vera. This has thrown my plans off considerably, but it will be amusing for me...

Amusing!... Yes, I've already passed that stage of spiritual life when all one seeks is happiness, when the heart urgently needs to love someone fiercely and passionately. Now my only wish is to be loved, and by very few people. I even think I'd be content with a single lasting attachment. What a wretched habit of the heart!...

One thing has always struck me as strange. I have never made myself the slave of a woman I loved. On the contrary, I have always gained irresistible power over her will and heart without trying at all. Why is that? Is it because I never value anything highly, and she is constantly afraid of letting me slip away? Or is it the magnetic influence of a powerful constitution? Or have I simply never managed to meet a woman with a stubborn character?

I must admit that I don't love women with strong characters. What do they need one for?

Actually, I remember now. Once—and only once—I loved a woman with a firm will that I could never overcome... We parted as enemies—and then, perhaps, if I had met her five years later, we would have parted differently...

Vera is ill, very ill, though she won't admit it. I'm afraid she has consumption, or that disease called "fievre lente"—a quite un-Russian disease, and one for which our language has no name.

The storm caught us in the grotto and kept us there for another half hour. Vera didn't make me swear that I would be faithful, or ask whether I had loved anyone else since we parted... She trusted me again with all her former ease, and I won't deceive her: she is the only woman in the world I could never deceive. I know we'll soon have to part again, perhaps forever. We will both take different roads to the grave, but her memory will remain inviolate in my soul. I've always told her this, and she believes me, though she says she doesn't.

At last we parted. I watched her for a long time, until her hat disappeared behind the shrubs and rocks. My heart tightened painfully, just as it had after our first parting. Oh, how glad I was to feel that! Could youth be returning to me, with its healing storms, or was this only the farewell glance, its last gift in memory of itself?... And to think that, in appearance, I am still a boy! My face, though pale, is still fresh; my limbs are supple and slender; my hair is thick and curly, my eyes sparkle, my blood is hot...

Returning home, I mounted my horse and galloped out onto the steppe. I love racing a fiery horse through the tall grass, into the desert wind; I greedily gulp the fragrant air and fix my gaze on the blue distance, trying to make out the misty shapes of things that grow clearer by the minute. Whatever sorrows weigh on my heart, whatever anxieties torment my thoughts—all vanish in an instant; my soul finds peace, and bodily fatigue overcomes the turmoil of the mind. There is no

woman's glance I would not forget at the sight of the tufted mountains, lit by the southern sun; at the sight of the deep-blue sky, or listening to the roar of the torrent as it plunges from cliff to cliff.

I imagine the Cossacks, yawning in their watchtowers, were long puzzled by the sight of me galloping around so needlessly and aimlessly. From my clothes, I am sure, they took me for a Circassian. In fact, I have been told that on horseback, in my Circassian costume, I look more like a Kabardian than many a Kabardian himself. And when it comes to that noble, warlike outfit, I am a perfect dandy. I have not a bit too much gold braid; my weapon is costly but simply made; the fur on my cap is neither too long nor too short; my leggings and shoes match perfectly; my tunic is white, and my Circassian jacket dark brown. I have long studied the mountaineer's seat on horseback, and nothing flatters my vanity more than having my horsemanship in the Cossack style praised. I keep four horses—one for myself and three for my friends, so I won't be bored roaming the fields alone; they gladly take my horses, but never ride with me.

It was already six in the evening when I remembered it was time for dinner. My horse was tired. I rode onto the road from Pyatigorsk to the German colony, where people from the resort often go on picnics. The road winds between bushes and descends into little ravines, where noisy brooks flow beneath the shade of tall grasses. All around, like an amphitheater, rise the blue masses of Mount Beshtau and the Zmeiny, Zhelezny, and Lysy Mountains. 26 As I descended into one of those ravines, I stopped to water my horse. Just then a noisy, glittering procession appeared on the road—the ladies in black and dark-blue riding habits, the gentlemen in outfits that mixed Circassian and Nizhegorodian styles. 27 Grushnitski rode in front with Princess Mary.

The ladies at the resort still believe Circassians attack in broad daylight. That was doubtless why Grushnitski had slung a saber and a pair of pistols over his soldier's cloak. He looked ridiculous in that heroic getup.

A tall bush hid me from their view, but I could see everything through the leaves and guess from their expressions that their conversation was taking a sentimental turn. At last they came near the slope; Grushnitski took hold of the Princess's horse's bridle, and I heard the end of their conversation:

"And do you want to spend your whole life in the Caucasus?" Princess Mary asked.

"What is Russia to me?" her companion replied. "A country where thousands of people will look down on me because they are richer than I am, whereas here—here this thick cloak hasn't kept me from getting to know you"...

"Quite the opposite..." Princess Mary said, blushing.

Grushnitski's face lit up with delight. He went on:

"Here, my life will pass noisily, unnoticed, and quickly, under the bullets of the savages, and if Heaven were to send me one bright glance from a woman's eyes each year—like the one that—"

Just then they reached my hiding place. I whipped my horse and rode out from behind the bush...

"My God, a Circassian!" Princess Mary cried in terror.

To reassure her completely, I replied in French, with a slight bow:

"Don't be afraid, madam. I'm no more dangerous than your companion"...

She grew embarrassed—but why? Because she had made a mistake, or because she found my answer insolent? I would prefer the latter to be true. Grushnitski shot me an annoyed glance.

Late that evening, around eleven, I went for a walk along the boulevard's lilac avenue. The town was asleep; only a few

windows were lit. On three sides, the black ridges of the cliffs loomed, along with the spurs of Mount Mashuk, whose summit was covered by an ominous cloud. The moon was rising in the east; in the distance, the snow-covered mountains gleamed like a silver fringe. The sentries' calls mingled now and then with the roar of the hot springs, whose water was let out at night. At times, a horse clattered loudly down the street, accompanied by the creaking of a Nogai wagon and the plaintive strain of a Tatar song.

I sat down on a bench and fell into thought... I felt the need to pour out my thoughts in friendly conversation... But with whom?...

"What is Vera doing now?" I wondered.

I would have given a great deal to hold her hand just then.

Suddenly I heard quick, uneven footsteps... Grushnitski, no doubt!... Yes, it was!

"Where have you been?"

"At Princess Ligovski's," he said with great importance. "How beautifully Mary sings!"...

"You know," I said to him, "I bet she doesn't know you're a cadet. She thinks you're an officer who's been demoted to the ranks"...

"Maybe so. What do I care!"... he said absently.

"No, I'm just saying"...

"But do you know you made her terribly angry today? She thought it was an outrageous act of insolence. It was only with difficulty that I convinced her you were so well-bred and knew society so well that you couldn't have meant to insult her. She says you have an insolent look and are certainly very full of yourself."

"She isn't wrong... But don't you want to defend her?"

"I'm sorry I don't yet have the right to do that"...

"Aha!" I said to myself. "Clearly he already has hopes."

"Still, it's worse for you," Grushnitski went on. "It will be hard for you to get to know them now, and what a pity! It's one of the most pleasant houses I know"...

I smiled to myself.

"My own home is the most pleasant place for me now," I said with a yawn, and got up to leave.

"But admit it—you regret it, don't you?"...

"Nonsense! If I want to, I'll be at Princess Ligovski's tomorrow evening!"...

"We'll see"...

"I'll even start courting Princess Mary, if you'd like me to"...

"Yes, if she's willing to talk to you"...

"I'm just waiting for her to get bored with your conversation... Goodbye"...

"Well, I'm going for a walk; there's no way I could sleep now... Look, let's go to the restaurant instead. They're playing cards there... What I need now is some strong sensations"...

"I hope you lose"...

I went home.

Chapter 15

May 21

NEARLY A WEEK HAS PASSED, and I still haven't made the Ligovskis' acquaintance. I'm waiting for a suitable opportunity. Grushnitski follows Princess Mary everywhere like a shadow. Their conversations go on endlessly; but when will she tire of him?... Her mother pays no attention, since he isn't in a position to marry. Behold the logic of mothers! I've caught two or three tender glances—this must be stopped.

Yesterday, for the first time, Vera appeared at the well... She hasn't gone outdoors since we met in the grotto. We lowered our cups at the same time, and as she bent forward, she whispered to me:

"You're not going to make the Ligovskis' acquaintance?... It's the only place we can meet"...

A reproach!... How tiresome! But I deserve it...

By the way, there's a subscription ball tomorrow in the restaurant's ballroom, and I'll dance the mazurka with Princess Mary.

Chapter 16

29Th May

THE RESTAURANT'S BALLROOM HAD BEEN turned into the assembly room of a Nobles' Club. The guests began arriving at nine o'clock. Princess Ligovski and her daughter were among the last to appear. Several women looked at Princess Mary with envy and malice because she dressed with taste. Those who considered themselves the local aristocracy hid their envy and attached themselves to her circle. What else could one expect? Wherever women gather, the company immediately divides into an upper and a lower circle.

Beneath the window, among a crowd of people, stood Grushnitski, pressing his face against the pane and never taking his eyes off his divinity. As she passed, she gave him an almost imperceptible nod. He beamed like the sun... The first dance was a polonaise, after which the musicians began a waltz. Spurs jingled, and skirts rose and whirled.

I stood behind a certain stout lady, overshadowed by rose-colored feathers. The magnificence of her dress reminded me of the days of the farthingale, and the mottled color of her far-from-smooth skin recalled the happy era of the black taffeta beauty patch. A huge wart on her neck was hidden by a brooch. She was saying to her cavalier, a captain of dragoons:

"That young Princess Ligovski is an intolerable creature! Just imagine, she jostled me and didn't apologize, but even turned around and stared at me through her lorgnette!... C'est

impayable!... And what does she have to be proud of? Someone ought to teach her a lesson"...

"That will be easy enough," replied the obliging captain, and he headed into the other room.

I went straight up to Princess Mary and, taking advantage of the local custom that allowed one to dance with a stranger, invited her to waltz with me.

She could barely keep from smiling and showing her triumph, but quickly managed to assume an air of complete indifference, even severity. Carelessly, she let her hand fall on my shoulder, tilted her head slightly to one side, and we began to dance. I have never known a waist so voluptuous and supple! Her fresh breath brushed my face; at times, a lock of hair, separated from its companions by the swirl of the waltz, slid across my burning cheek...

I made three turns around the ballroom (she waltzes remarkably well). She was out of breath, her eyes had grown dim, and her half-open lips could barely whisper the necessary "merci, monsieur."

After a few moments of silence, I said to her, putting on a very humble air:

"I've heard, Princess, that although I'm quite unacquainted with you, I've already had the misfortune to incur your displeasure... that you considered me insolent. Could that really be true?"

"Would you like to confirm that opinion now?" she replied, with an ironic little grimace—though it suited her expressive face very well.

"If I've had the audacity to insult you in any way, then allow me the still greater audacity of asking your pardon... And, indeed, I'd very much like to prove to you that you're mistaken about me"...

"You'll find that rather difficult"...

"But why?"...

"Because you never visit us, and most likely there won't be many more of these balls."

"That means," I thought, "that their doors are closed to me forever."

"You know, Princess," I said to her, somewhat vexed, "one should never reject a penitent criminal: in his despair, he may become twice as much of a criminal as before... and then"...

Sudden laughter and whispering from the people around us made me turn my head and break off my sentence. A few paces away stood a group of men, including the captain of dragoons, who had shown hostile intentions toward the charming Princess. He seemed especially pleased with something, rubbing his hands, laughing, and exchanging knowing glances with his companions. Suddenly, a gentleman in an evening coat, with long mustaches and a red face, broke away from the crowd and staggered straight toward Princess Mary. He was drunk. Stopping in front of the embarrassed Princess, he put his hands behind his back, fixed his dull gray eyes on her, and said in a hoarse treble:

"Permettez... but what's the point of that sort of thing here... All I need to say is: I'm claiming you for the mazurka"...

"Very well!" she replied in a trembling voice, casting a pleading glance around. Alas! Her mother was far away, and none of the gentlemen she knew was nearby. A certain aide-de-camp seemed to have seen the whole scene, but he hid behind the crowd so as not to get mixed up in the affair.

"What?" said the drunken gentleman, winking at the captain of dragoons, who was encouraging him with gestures. "Don't you want to dance, then?... All the same, I have the honor once again of claiming you for the mazurka... Perhaps you think I'm drunk! That's all right!... I can dance all the more easily, I assure you"...

I saw that she was about to faint with fear and indignation.

I went up to the drunken gentleman, gripped his arm none too gently, and, looking him straight in the face, asked him to leave. "Because," I added, "the Princess promised long ago to dance the mazurka with me."

"Well, then, there's nothing to be done! Another time!" he said, bursting into laughter, and withdrew to his embarrassed companions, who immediately led him into another room.

I was rewarded with a deep, wondrous glance.

The Princess went over to her mother and told her the whole story. Her mother sought me out in the crowd and thanked me. She told me that she knew my mother and was friends with half a dozen of my aunts.

"I don't know how it happened that we haven't made your acquaintance until now," she added, "but admit it: you alone are to blame. You avoid everyone in a positively unseemly way. I hope the atmosphere in my drawing room will dispel your gloom... Don't you think so?"

I uttered one of the phrases everyone ought to have ready for such an occasion.

The quadrilles dragged on for a dreadfully long time.

At last, the music began in the gallery, and Princess Mary and I took our places.

I didn't once mention the drunken gentleman, my earlier behavior, or Grushnitski. The unpleasant scene gradually faded from her mind; her face brightened, and she joked delightfully. Her conversation was witty without trying to be, lively and spontaneous; her observations were sometimes profound... In a very roundabout sentence, I let her understand that I had liked her for a long time. She lowered her head and blushed slightly.

"You're a strange man!" she said with a forced laugh, lifting her velvet eyes to me.

"I didn't want to make your acquaintance," I continued, "because you're surrounded by such a dense crowd of admirers, and I was afraid I'd disappear from view altogether."

"You needn't have been afraid; they're all very tiresome"...

"All of them? Surely not all?"

She stared at me as if trying to remember something, then blushed slightly again and finally said decisively:

"All!"

"Even my friend Grushnitski?"

"But is he your friend?" she asked, sounding doubtful.

"Yes."

"He, of course, doesn't belong in the tiresome category"...

"But in the unfortunate one!" I said, laughing.

"Of course! But do you think that's funny? I'd like to see you in his place"...

"Well? I was a cadet myself once, and honestly, it was the best time of my life!"

"Is he a cadet, then?"... she said quickly, then added: "But I thought"...

"What did you think?"...

"Nothing! Who's that lady?"

After that, the conversation took a different turn and never returned to the earlier subject.

The mazurka ended, and we parted until we met again. The ladies drove off in different directions. I went to get some supper and ran into Werner.

"Aha!" he said. "So it's you! And yet you didn't want to meet Princess Mary except by saving her from certain death."

"I did better," I replied. "I saved her from fainting at the ball"...

"How did that happen? Tell me."

"No, guess!—You, who can guess everything in the world!"

Chapter 17

May 30

AROUND SEVEN IN THE EVENING, I was walking along the boulevard. Grushnitski spotted me from a long way off and came over. A kind of ridiculous rapture shone in his eyes. He squeezed my hand warmly and said in a tragic voice:

"Thank you, Pechorin... You understand me?"

"No; but in any case, it's nothing to be grateful for," I answered, since I had no good deed on my conscience.

"What? But yesterday! Have you forgotten?... Mary told me everything"...

"Why, do you share everything already? Even gratitude?"...

"Listen," Grushnitski said earnestly. "Please don't make fun of my love if you want to remain my friend... You see, I love her to the point of madness... and I think—I hope—she loves me too... I have a favor to ask. You'll be at their house this evening; promise me you'll observe everything. I know you're experienced in these matters; you know women better than I do... Women! Women! Who can understand them? Their smiles contradict their glances; their words promise and entice, but the tone of their voice pushes you away... Sometimes they grasp and divine our most secret thoughts in an instant; at other times, they can't understand the plainest hints... Take Princess Mary, for instance: yesterday, when her eyes rested on me, they blazed with passion; today they're dull and cold"...

"That may be the effect of the mineral waters," I replied.

"You see the bad side of everything... Materialist," he added contemptuously. "But let's talk about something else."

Satisfied with his bad pun, he cheered up.

At nine o'clock, we went together to Princess Ligovski's.

As I passed Vera's windows, I saw her looking out. We exchanged a fleeting glance. She entered the Ligovskis' drawing room soon after us. Princess Ligovski introduced me to her as one of the princess's own relatives. Tea was served. There were many guests, and everyone joined in the conversation. I tried to please the Princess, joked, and made her laugh heartily several times. Princess Mary, too, nearly burst out laughing more than once, but restrained herself so as not to break character. She thinks a languid manner suits her, and perhaps she's right. Grushnitski seems very glad that my gaiety hasn't rubbed off on her.

After tea, we all went into the drawing room.

"Are you pleased with my obedience, Vera?" I said as I passed her.

She gave me a look full of love and gratitude. I've grown used to such looks, though once they were my greatest happiness. The Princess seated her daughter at the piano, and everyone begged her to sing. I kept quiet and, taking advantage of the commotion, stepped aside with Vera by the window. She wanted to say something of great importance to us both... It turned out to be—nonsense...

Meanwhile, my indifference was irritating Princess Mary, as I could tell from one angry, flashing glance she cast at me... Oh, I understand the art of conversation wonderfully well: silent but expressive, brief but forceful!...

She began to sing. She has a good voice, but sings badly... Still, I wasn't listening.

Grushnitski, by contrast, leaned his elbows on the grand piano, facing her, devouring her with his eyes and murmuring every minute: "Charmant! Delicieux!"

"Listen," Vera said to me. "I don't want you to meet my husband, but you must make yourself agreeable to the Princess; that will be easy for you. You can do anything you want. We'll only see each other here"...

"Only here?"...

She blushed and continued:

"You know I'm your slave: I've never been able to resist you... and I'll be punished for it; you'll stop loving me! At least, I want to protect my reputation... not for my own sake—you know that very well!... Oh, I beg you: don't torture me as you did before with pointless doubts and feigned coldness! I may die soon; I feel myself growing weaker day by day... And yet I can't think about the afterlife; I think only of you... You men don't understand the delight of a glance, of a touch of the hand... but I swear to you that when I hear your voice, I feel such a deep, strange bliss that even the most passionate kisses couldn't replace it."

Meanwhile, Princess Mary had finished singing. Murmurs of praise could be heard all around. I went up to her after all the other guests and remarked rather casually on her voice.

She made a little face, pouting her lower lip, and gave a very sarcastic curtsey.

"That's all the more flattering," she said, "because you weren't listening to me at all; but perhaps you don't like music?"...

"On the contrary, I do... Especially after dinner."

"Grushnitski is right to say that you have very prosaic tastes... I see that you like music for its gastronomic benefits."

"You're mistaken again: I'm not an epicure at all. I have a terrible digestion. But music after dinner puts one to sleep, and sleeping after dinner is good for you; so I like music for medicinal reasons. In the evening, by contrast, it excites my nerves too much: I become either too melancholy or too cheerful. Both are tiring when there's no real reason to be sad

or happy. Besides, melancholy in company is ridiculous, and excessive cheerfulness is unbecoming"...

She didn't hear me out. She went away and sat beside Grushnitski, and they began a sort of sentimental conversation. Apparently, the Princess answered his wise remarks rather absentmindedly and incoherently, though she tried to show she was listening attentively. Sometimes he looked at her in surprise, trying to guess what was causing the inner agitation that occasionally showed in her restless glance...

But I've seen through you, my dear Princess! Be careful! You want to pay me back in kind, to wound my vanity—you won't succeed! And if you declare war on me, I'll be merciless!

During the evening, I deliberately tried several times to join their conversation, but she responded to my remarks rather coldly, and at last I withdrew in feigned annoyance. Princess Mary was triumphant, and so was Grushnitski. Triumph, my friends, and enjoy it while you can!... You won't be triumphant for long!... It can't be otherwise. I have a presentiment... Whenever I've met a woman, I've always guessed without fail whether she would fall in love with me.

I spent the rest of the evening beside Vera, talking at length about the old days... Why does she love me so much? Truly, I can't say, especially since she is the only woman who has understood me completely, with all my petty weaknesses and evil passions... Could wickedness really be so attractive?...

Grushnitski and I left the house together. In the street, he took my arm and, after a long silence, said:

"Well?"

"You're a fool," I would have liked to answer. But I held back and only shrugged.

Chapter 18

June 6

ALL THESE DAYS I HAVE stuck to my plan. Princess Mary has come to enjoy talking with me; I have told her a few strange episodes from my life, and she is beginning to see me as an extraordinary man. I make fun of everything in the world, especially feelings, and she is becoming wary. When I am around, she doesn't dare launch into sentimental conversations with Grushnitski, and a few times now she has answered his advances with a mocking smile. But whenever Grushnitski approaches her, I put on a meek expression and leave the two of them alone. The first time, she was glad, or tried to seem glad; the second time, she was angry with me; the third—with Grushnitski.

"You have very little vanity!" she said to me yesterday. "What makes you think I find Grushnitski more entertaining?"

I replied that I was sacrificing my own pleasure for the happiness of a friend.

"And my pleasure, too," she added.

I looked at her intently and put on a serious expression. Then I didn't say a single word to her for the rest of the day... In the evening, she was thoughtful; this morning at the well, even more so. When I approached her, she was listening absentmindedly to Grushnitski, who seemed to be rhapsodizing about Nature. But as soon as she noticed me, she began to laugh—at the most inappropriate moment—pretending not to

see me. I went a little farther and began watching her discreetly. She turned away from her companion and yawned twice. She had clearly grown tired of Grushnitski—I won't speak to her for another two days.

Chapter 19

June 11

I OFTEN ASK MYSELF WHY I am so stubbornly trying to win the love of a young woman I do not want to deceive and will never marry. Why this womanish coquetry? Vera loves me more than Princess Mary ever will. If I had considered the latter an unattainable beauty, I might have been tempted by the challenge...

But there is no such challenge here! So my present feeling is not that restless craving for love that torments us in the early years of youth, flinging us from one woman to another until we find one who cannot stand us. Then our constancy begins —that sincere, unending passion that can be represented mathematically by a line descending from a point into space. The secret of its endlessness lies only in the impossibility of reaching its goal—that is, its end.

So what is my motive for all this trouble? Envy of Grushnitski? Poor fellow!

He hardly deserves it. Or is it the result of that ugly but irresistible feeling that makes us destroy our neighbor's sweet illusions just for the petty satisfaction of saying to him, when he asks in despair what he should believe:

"My friend, the same thing happened to me, and yet you see I eat dinner, have supper, and sleep quite peacefully. I hope I'll know how to die without tears or lamentations, too."

There is, indeed, boundless pleasure in possessing a young soul just beginning to blossom! It is like a little flower that gives off its finest fragrance at the kiss of the sun's first ray. You should pluck it then, breathe in its scent to the full, and toss it onto the road: perhaps someone will pick it up! I feel within me an insatiable hunger that devours everything in its path. I regard other people's sufferings and joys only in terms of how they affect me, treating them as nourishment for my spiritual strength. I am no longer capable of foolish acts driven by passion. Circumstances have stifled my ambition, but it has taken another form, because ambition is nothing more or less than a thirst for power, and my greatest pleasure is to bring everything around me under my will. To inspire love, devotion, and awe in someone—isn't that the first sign, and greatest triumph, of power? To be the cause of someone else's suffering and joy—without having any real right to be—isn't that the sweetest food for our pride? And what is happiness? Satisfied pride. If I thought myself the best, most powerful man in the world, I would be happy; if everyone loved me, I would find inexhaustible springs of love within myself. Evil begets evil; the first suffering teaches us the satisfaction of tormenting someone else. The idea of evil cannot enter the mind without stirring a desire to put it into practice. "Ideas are organic entities," someone has said. Their very birth gives them form, and that form is action. The person who conceives the most ideas accomplishes the most. For that reason, a genius chained to an office desk must die or go mad, just as a man of powerful constitution, but with a sedentary life and simple habits, often dies of a stroke.

Passions are merely ideas in their earliest development; they are a feature of the heart's youth, and only a fool thinks they will agitate him all his life. Many quiet rivers begin as noisy waterfalls, and no stream leaps and foams all the way to the sea. That quietness, though, is often a sign of great, hidden

strength. Deep, full feelings and thoughts do not allow for frenzied outbursts. In suffering and enjoyment, the soul takes strict account of all it experiences and convinces itself that things have to be this way. It knows that without storms, the sun's constant heat would dry it up! It draws strength from its own life, coddling and punishing itself like a favorite child. Only in this highest state of self-knowledge can a person appreciate divine justice.

Reading over this page, I see that I have wandered far from my subject... But what does it matter?... You see, I'm writing this diary for myself, and anything I jot down in it will eventually become a valuable memory for me.

. . . . .

Grushnitski came to see me today. He flung himself around my neck; he has been promoted to officer. We drank champagne. Doctor Werner came in after him.

"I won't congratulate you," he said to Grushnitski.

"Why not?"

"Because the soldier's cloak suits you very well, and you must admit that an infantry uniform made by one of the local tailors won't make you any more interesting... Don't you see? Until now, you've been an exception, but now you'll be just like everyone else."

"Go ahead, doctor, go ahead! You won't stop me from rejoicing. He doesn't know," Grushnitski whispered to me, "how many hopes these epaulettes have given me... Oh!... Epaulettes, epaulettes! Your little stars are guiding stars! No! I'm perfectly happy now!"

"Are you coming with us on our walk to the hollow?" I asked him.

"Me? I wouldn't show my face to Princess Mary until my uniform is finished."

"Would you like me to tell her how happy you are?"

"No, please, not a word... I want to surprise her"...

"Tell me, though, how are things going with her?"

He grew embarrassed and fell silent. He would gladly have bragged and lied, but his conscience wouldn't let him; at the same time, he was ashamed to admit the truth.

"What do you think? Does she love you?"...

"Love me? Good heavens, Pechorin, what ideas you have!... How could she possibly love me so soon?... And a well-bred woman, even if she is in love, will never say so"...

"Very well! And I suppose, in your opinion, a well-bred man should also keep quiet about his passion?"...

"Ah, my dear fellow! There are ways of doing everything; often things can go unspoken and still be understood"...

"That's true... But the love we read in someone's eyes commits a woman to nothing, whereas words... Be careful, Grushnitski, she's fooling you!"

"She?" he replied, raising his eyes heavenward and smiling smugly. "I'm sorry for you, Pechorin!"...

He left.

In the evening, a large party set off to walk to the hollow.

According to the learned people of Pyatigorsk, the hollow in question is nothing more than an extinct crater. It lies on the slope of Mount Mashuk, a verst from town, and is reached by a narrow path through brushwood and rocks. As we climbed the hill, I offered Princess Mary my arm, and she kept hold of it throughout the excursion.

Our conversation began with slander. I started reviewing our acquaintances, present and absent, first exposing their ridiculous sides, then their bad ones. My temper flared. I began in jest and ended in genuine malice. At first she was amused, but then she was frightened.

"You are a dangerous man!" she said. "I would rather die in the woods beneath an assassin's knife than beneath your tongue... I'm quite serious: when you feel like speaking ill of

me, take a knife instead and cut my throat. I don't think you'd find that very difficult."

"So I'm like an assassin, then?"...

"You're worse"...

I fell silent for a moment, then, putting on a deeply moved air, said:

"Yes, that has been my lot since earliest childhood! Everyone read signs of bad qualities on my face that I did not possess; but people assumed they were there—and so they came to be. I was modest, but they accused me of slyness, so I grew secretive. I felt good and evil deeply—no one showed me affection, everyone insulted me, and I grew vindictive. I was gloomy while the other children were cheerful and talkative; I felt superior to them, but they considered me inferior, and I grew envious. I was ready to love the whole world, but no one understood me, so I learned to hate. My colorless youth passed in conflict with myself and the world. Afraid of ridicule, I buried my best feelings deep in my heart, where they died. I spoke the truth, but no one believed me, so I began to deceive. Once I had thoroughly learned the ways of the world and the workings of society, I became skilled in the art of living. Then I saw how people without any skill were happy, enjoying for free the advantages I had pursued so tirelessly. Despair was born in my breast—not the kind cured by the muzzle of a pistol, but the cold, powerless despair hidden beneath a mask of friendliness and a good-natured smile. I became a moral cripple. One half of my soul ceased to exist: it dried up, evaporated, died, and I cut it off and cast it away. The other half lived on, serving everyone, but went unnoticed because no one knew the other half had ever existed. Now you have awakened its memory in me, and I have read you its epitaph. Many people find epitaphs ridiculous, but I do not—especially when I remember what lies beneath them. I won't ask you to share my opinion, though. If

this outburst seems absurd to you, please laugh! I warn you that your laughter won't upset me in the least."

At that moment, I met her eyes: tears were welling up in them. Her arm, resting on mine, was trembling; her cheeks were aflame. She pitied me! Sympathy—a feeling to which women so readily give in—had sunk its claws into her inexperienced heart. Throughout the excursion she was distracted and flirted with no one—and that is a great sign!

We reached the hollow. The ladies left their escorts, but she did not let go of my arm. The local dandies' jokes failed to make her laugh; the steep drop beside which she stood did not frighten her, though the other ladies let out shrill cries and shut their eyes.

On the way back, I did not resume our melancholy conversation, but she gave short, absent-minded answers to my idle questions and jokes.

"Have you ever been in love?" I finally asked her.

She looked at me intently, shook her head, and fell into a reverie again. It was clear she wanted to say something but did not know how to begin. Her breast heaved... And that was only natural! A muslin sleeve is poor protection, and an electric spark was passing from my arm to hers. Almost every passion begins that way, and we are often quite mistaken when we think a woman loves us for our moral and physical merits. Those may prepare and predispose her heart to receive the holy flame, but for all that, it is the first touch that decides the matter.

"I've been very kind today, haven't I?" Princess Mary said to me with a forced smile when we returned from our walk.

We parted.

She is dissatisfied with herself. She reproaches herself for being cold... Oh, that is the first and greatest triumph!

Tomorrow she will want to make it up to me. I know the whole routine by heart already—that's what makes it so tedious!

Chapter 20

June 12

I SAW VERA TODAY. She has started tormenting me with her jealousy. It seems Princess Mary has decided to confide the secrets of her heart to Vera—a wise choice, I must say!

"I can guess where all this is heading," Vera said to me. "You might as well just tell me that you're in love with her."

"But what if I'm not in love with her?"

"Then why pursue her, disturb her, stir up her imagination?... Oh, I know you well! Listen—if you want me to believe you, come to Kislovodsk in a week. We're moving there the day after tomorrow. Princess Mary will stay here longer. Take lodgings next door to us. We'll be living in the large house near the spring, on the mezzanine floor. Princess Ligovski will be downstairs, and next door is a house belonging to the same landlord that hasn't been rented yet... Will you come?"...

I promised, and that very day I sent word to reserve the lodgings.

Grushnitski came to see me at six and announced that his uniform would be ready tomorrow, just in time for him to wear it to the ball.

"At last I'll dance with her all evening... And then I'll talk to my heart's content," he added.

"When is the ball?"

"Why, tomorrow! Don't you know? It's a big festival, and the local authorities have taken charge of organizing it"...

"Let's go to the boulevard"...

"Not a chance, in this wretched cloak"...

"What! Have you stopped loving it?"...

I went out alone and, when I met Princess Mary, asked her to save the mazurka for me. She seemed surprised and delighted.

"I thought you would dance only because you had to, as you did last time," she said with a very charming smile...

She doesn't seem to notice Grushnitski's absence at all.

"You'll be pleasantly surprised tomorrow," I told her.

"By what?"

"It's a secret... You'll find out at the ball."

I spent the rest of the evening at Princess Ligovski's. No other guests were there except Vera and a certain very amusing little old gentleman. I was in high spirits and improvised all sorts of extraordinary stories. Princess Mary sat opposite me and listened to my nonsense with such intense, strained, even tender attention that I grew ashamed of myself. What had happened to her liveliness, her flirtatiousness, her whims, her haughty manner, her contemptuous smile, her distracted gaze?...

Vera noticed everything, and her sickly face showed profound grief. She was sitting in the shadow by the window, sunk into a wide armchair... I pitied her.

Then I told the whole dramatic story of how we met and fell in love—concealing it all, of course, under false names.

I portrayed my tenderness, my anxieties, and my raptures so vividly, and presented her actions and character in such a favorable light, that she could not help forgiving me for flirting with Princess Mary.

She got up, sat beside us, and brightened... It was two in the morning before we remembered that the doctors had ordered her to go to bed at eleven.

Chapter 21

June 13

HALF AN HOUR BEFORE THE ball, Grushnitski appeared before me in the full splendor of his Line Infantry uniform. A small bronze chain was attached to his third button, with a double lorgnette hanging from it. His enormous epaulettes were bent backward and upward like Cupid's wings; his boots creaked. In his left hand he held cinnamon-colored kid gloves and a forage cap, while with his right he kept twisting his frizzled forelock into tiny curls. His face showed both self-satisfaction and a certain shyness. His festive appearance and proud stride would have made me burst out laughing, if that had suited my intentions.

He tossed his cap and gloves onto the table and began straightening his coat and adjusting his appearance in the mirror. An enormous black handkerchief, twisted into a very high, stiff cravat, stuck an inch above his collar, its bristles propping up his chin. He thought it looked too small and pulled it up as far as his ears. The effort, combined with the tight, uncomfortable collar of his uniform, made his face turn red.

"They say you've been courting my princess rather aggressively these last few days," he said, quite casually and without looking at me.

"'Where are we fools to drink tea!'" 271 I replied, repeating a favorite phrase of one of the cleverest rogues of the past, once celebrated in a song by Pushkin.

"Tell me, does my uniform fit me well?... Oh, the cursed Jew!... It's cutting into my armpits!... Have you got any cologne?"

"Good heavens, what more do you want? You already reek of rose pomade."

"Never mind. Give me some..."

He poured half a vial over his cravat, handkerchief, and sleeves.

"Are you going to dance?" he asked.

"I don't think so."

"I'm afraid I'll have to open the mazurka with Princess Mary, and I hardly know a single figure..."

"Have you asked her to dance the mazurka with you?"

"Not yet..."

"Make sure nobody beats you to it..."

"That's right, of course!" he said, slapping his forehead. "Good-bye... I'll go wait for her at the entrance."

He grabbed his forage cap and ran off.

Half an hour later, I set out too. The street was dark and deserted. People were crowding around the assembly rooms—or the inn, if you prefer. The windows were lit, and the strains of the regimental band drifted toward me on the evening breeze. I walked slowly; I felt melancholy.

"Could it be," I thought, "that my only purpose on earth is to destroy other people's hopes? Ever since I began to live and act, it seems to have been my fate to bring other people's dramas to an end, as if, without me, no one could die or fall into despair! I have been the indispensable figure in the fifth act; against my will, I have played the wretched part of executioner or traitor. What purpose has fate had in all this?... Surely I wasn't destined to write middle-class tragedies and family

romances, or to collaborate with the purveyor of stories for the 'Reader's Library,' 272 for example?... How can I know?... Aren't there many people who, at the start of life, expect to end it like Lord Byron or Alexander the Great, yet remain Titular Councillors 273 all their lives?"

Entering the ballroom, I slipped into a crowd of men and began observing.

Grushnitski stood beside Princess Mary, speaking with great intensity. She listened absentmindedly, looking around with her fan against her lips. Her face showed impatience; her eyes searched the room for someone. I quietly moved behind them to listen to their conversation.

"You're torturing me, Princess!" Grushnitski was saying. "You've changed terribly since I last saw you..."

"You've changed too," she replied, glancing quickly at him. He failed to notice the concealed sneer.

"Me? Changed?... Oh, never! You know that's impossible! Anyone who has seen you once will carry your divine image with him forever."

"Stop..."

"But why won't you let me say tonight what you've so often listened to graciously—and so recently, too?..."

"Because I don't like repetitions," she replied with a laugh.

"Oh! I was bitterly mistaken!... I foolishly thought these epaulettes, at least, would give me reason to hope... No, I'd have been better off staying forever in that contemptible soldier's cloak, which was probably what won me your attention..."

"Actually, the cloak suits you much better..."

At that moment I approached and bowed to Princess Mary. She blushed slightly and went on quickly:

"Isn't it true, Monsieur Pechorin, that Monsieur Grushnitski looks much better in the gray cloak?"...

"I disagree," I replied. "He looks even younger in his uniform."

That was a blow Grushnitski couldn't bear. Like all boys, he pretends to be an old man; he thinks the deep marks of passion on his face can take the place of lines carved by Time. He shot me a furious look, stamped his foot, and walked away.

"Admit it," I said to Princess Mary, "although he was always ridiculous, not so long ago he seemed interesting to you... in the gray cloak?"...

She lowered her eyes and said nothing.

Grushnitski followed the Princess around all evening, dancing either with her or opposite her. He devoured her with his eyes, sighed, and wore her down with pleas and reproaches. After the third quadrille, she had begun to hate him.

"I didn't expect this from you," he said, coming up to me and taking my arm.

"What?"

"You're going to dance the mazurka with her?" he asked solemnly. "She admitted it..."

"Well, so what? It's no secret, is it?"

"Of course not... I should have expected it from that little flirt... But I'll have my revenge!"

"You should blame your cloak or your epaulettes, but why accuse her? How is it her fault that she doesn't like you anymore?"...

"But why give me hope?"

"Why did you hope? I can understand wanting something and striving for it! But who ever hopes?"

"You've won the wager, but not completely," he said with a spiteful smile.

The mazurka began. Grushnitski chose no one but the Princess, and other partners chose her every minute: clearly, a conspiracy against me—all the better! She wants to talk to me, and they're keeping her from it—she'll want to even more.

I squeezed her hand once or twice; the second time she pulled it away without a word.

"I won't sleep well tonight," she said to me when the mazurka ended.

"Grushnitski is to blame for that."

"Oh, no!"

Her face grew so thoughtful, so sad, that I promised myself I would make sure to kiss her hand that evening.

The guests began to leave. As I helped Princess Mary into her carriage, I quickly pressed her little hand to my lips. The night was dark, and no one could see.

I returned to the ballroom feeling very pleased with myself.

The young men, including Grushnitski, were having supper at the large table. When I came in, they all fell silent; evidently they had been talking about me. Since the last ball, many of them have been sulking, especially the captain of dragoons. And now, it seems, a hostile faction is actually forming against me, led by Grushnitski. He wears such a proud, courageous air...

I'm very glad; I love enemies, though not in the Christian sense. They amuse me and stir my blood. Always to be on guard, to catch every glance and the meaning of every word, to guess people's intentions, crush conspiracies, pretend to be fooled, then suddenly, with one blow, bring down the whole immense, painstakingly built edifice of cunning and design—that's what I call life.

During supper, Grushnitski kept whispering and exchanging winks with the captain of dragoons.

Chapter 22

14Th June

VERA AND HER HUSBAND LEFT for Kislovodsk this morning. I met their carriage as I was walking to Princess Ligovski's. Vera nodded to me; reproach was in her glance.

So who is to blame? Why won't she give me a chance to see her alone? Love is like fire—if it isn't fed, it dies out. Perhaps jealousy will accomplish what my entreaties have failed to do.

I stayed at Princess Ligovski's for a whole hour. Mary hasn't been out; she's ill. She wasn't on the boulevard in the evening. The newly formed faction, armed with lorgnettes, has indeed taken on a menacing look. I'm glad Princess Mary is ill; they might behave impertinently toward her. Grushnitski goes about with his hair disheveled and an air of despair. He's evidently suffering, in fact; his vanity in particular has been wounded. But, you see, some people are amusing even in despair!...

On my way home, I noticed that something was missing. I haven't seen her! She's ill! Surely I haven't really fallen in love with her?... What nonsense!

Chapter 23

15Th June

AT ELEVEN IN THE MORNING—the hour when Princess Ligovski is usually sweating in the Ermolov baths—I walked past her house. Princess Mary was sitting pensively at the window; when she saw me, she sprang up.

I entered the anteroom. There was nobody there, and, taking advantage of the freedom allowed by local custom, I made my way into the drawing room without being announced.

Princess Mary's lovely face was clouded with a dull pallor. She stood by the piano, leaning one hand on the back of an armchair; her hand was trembling very slightly. I went up to her quietly and said:

"Are you angry with me?"...

She raised a deep, weary gaze to me and shook her head. Her lips were about to form words, but she couldn't speak; her eyes filled with tears. She sank into the armchair and buried her face in her hands.

"What's wrong?" I said, taking her hand.

"You don't respect me!... Oh, leave me!"...

I took a few steps... She straightened in her chair, her eyes flashing.

I stopped, took hold of the doorknob, and said:

"Forgive me, Princess. I've acted like a madman... It won't happen again; I'll see to that... But how can you know what has

been going on in my soul until now? You'll never find out, and that's all the better for you. Farewell."

As I was leaving, I thought I heard her weeping.

I wandered around the slopes of Mount Mashuk on foot until evening, exhausting myself terribly. When I got home, I threw myself onto my bed, completely worn out.

Werner came to see me.

"Is it true," he asked, "that you're going to marry Princess Mary?"

"What?"

"The whole town is saying so. All my patients are talking about this important news; but you know what these patients are like: they know everything."

"This is one of Grushnitski's tricks," I said to myself.

"To prove these rumors false, doctor, I'll tell you in confidence that I'm moving to Kislovodsk tomorrow"...

"And Princess Mary, too?"

"No, she'll stay here another week"...

"So you're not going to get married?"...

"Doctor, doctor! Look at me! Do I look even remotely like a bridegroom, or anything of the kind?"

"I'm not saying that... But you know there are occasions..." he added with a crafty smile—"when an honorable man is obliged to marry, and there are mothers who, to say the least, don't prevent such occasions... So, as a friend, I'd advise you to be more cautious. The air around here is very dangerous. How many handsome young men, deserving a better fate, have I seen leave here straight for the altar!... Would you believe it, they were even going to find a wife for me! That is, one person was—a local lady with a very pale daughter. I had the misfortune to tell her that her daughter's color would return after marriage, and then she offered me her daughter's hand and her entire fortune—fifty serfs, I think. But I replied that I was unfit for such an honor."

Werner left, fully convinced he had put me on my guard.

From his words, I gathered that various ugly rumors about Princess Mary and me were already spreading around town: Grushnitski will pay for this!

Chapter 24

18Th June

I'VE BEEN IN KISLOVODSK FOR three days now. Every day I see Vera at the well and out walking. In the morning, when I wake, I sit by my window and point my lorgnette at her balcony. She has been dressed for ages and is waiting for our agreed signal. We meet as if by chance in the garden that slopes down from our houses to the well. The life-giving mountain air has restored her color and strength. It's no accident that Narzan is called the "Spring of Heroes." The locals say the air in Kislovodsk stirs the heart to love, and that all the romances begun at the foot of Mount Mashuk reach their fulfillment here. Indeed, everything here breathes solitude; everything has an air of secrecy—the deep shadows of the linden-lined paths, bending over the torrent that falls noisily and foaming from ledge to ledge, cutting its way between mountains now turning green; the silent, mist-filled ravines, branching away in every direction; the freshness of the aromatic air, laden with the scent of tall southern grasses and white acacia; the ceaseless, sweetly drowsy murmur of the cool streams, which meet at the end of the valley, flow on in friendly rivalry, and finally plunge into the Podkumok. On this side, the ravine widens and becomes a green hollow, through which the dusty road winds. Whenever I look at it, I seem to see a carriage coming along, with a rosy little face looking out of its window. Many carriages have passed by already—but there's still no sign of that

particular one. The village behind the fortress has grown populous. In the restaurant, built on a hill a few steps from my lodgings, lights begin to shine in the evening through the double row of poplars; noise and the clink of glasses carry on late into the night.

Nowhere do people drink such quantities of Kakhetian wine and mineral water as they do here.

"And many are willing to mix the two,

But that's something I never do."

Every day, Grushnitski and his gang can be found brawling at the inn, and he has almost stopped greeting me.

He arrived only yesterday, and has already managed to quarrel with three old men who were going to take their places in the baths ahead of him.

Clearly, his misfortunes are stirring a warlike spirit in him.

Chapter 25

22Nd June

AT LAST THEY'VE ARRIVED. I was sitting by the window when I heard their carriage clatter. My heart throbbed... What does it mean? Could I be in love?... I'm so foolishly made that something like this might be expected of me.

I dined at their house. Princess Ligovski looked at me very tenderly and stayed by her daughter's side... A bad sign! On the other hand, Vera is jealous of me because of Princess Mary—though I have been working toward that good fortune. What won't a woman do to spite her rival? I remember once a woman loved me simply because I was in love with someone else. Nothing is more paradoxical than the female mind. It's hard to convince a woman of anything; you have to lead her to convince herself. The order of the arguments by which women demolish their prejudices is utterly original. To understand their logic, you have to overturn every scholastic rule of logic in your own mind. For example, the usual way:

"This man loves me; but I'm married, so I must not love him."

The woman's way:

"I must not love him, because I'm married; but he loves me —therefore..."

A few dots here, because reason has nothing more to say. But generally, the tongue and the eyes still have something to say, and then the heart—if there is such a thing.

What if these notes should one day meet a woman's eye?

"Slander!" she will exclaim indignantly.

Ever since poets began writing and women began reading them (for which the poets should be deeply grateful), women have been called angels so often that, in their innocence, they have truly believed the compliment, forgetting that those same poets, for money, have glorified Nero as a demigod...

It would be unreasonable for me to speak of women so maliciously—I, who have loved nothing else in the world; I, who have always been ready to sacrifice comfort, ambition, even life itself for their sake... But you see, in a fit of vexation and wounded vanity, I'm not trying to tear away the magic veil that only a practiced eye can see through. No, all I say about them is merely the result of

"A mind that has observed coldly,

A heart that bears the mark of grief."

Women ought to wish that all men knew them as well as I do, because I have loved them a hundred times more since I stopped being afraid of them and understood their little weaknesses.

By the way, the other day Werner compared women to the enchanted forest Tasso describes in his Jerusalem Delivered.

"As soon as you approach," he said, "terrors will swoop at you from every direction—may Heaven protect us from them! Duty, pride, propriety, public opinion, ridicule, contempt... You must simply go straight ahead without looking at them. Gradually the monsters disappear, and a bright, peaceful clearing opens before you, with the green myrtle blooming at its center. But woe to you if, at the first steps, your heart falters and you turn back!"

Chapter 26

June 24

THIS EVENING HAS BEEN FULL of events. About three versts from Kislovodsk, in the gorge through which the Podkumok flows, there is a cliff called the Ring. It is a natural arch high on a hill, through which the setting sun casts its last fiery glance at the world. A large party set out to watch the sunset through this rock window. To tell the truth, none of them was thinking about the sun. I rode beside Princess Mary. On our way home, we had to ford the Podkumok. Mountain streams, even the smallest, are dangerous, especially because the bottom is constantly shifting like a kaleidoscope: the current changes it every day; where there was a rock yesterday, there is a hollow today. I took Princess Mary's horse by the bridle and led it into the water, which came only up to its knees. We began moving slowly, diagonally against the current. It is well known that when crossing fast streams, you should never look at the water, because it will make your head spin. I forgot to warn Princess Mary about that.

We had reached the middle and were right in the current's whirl when she suddenly swayed in her saddle.

"I feel ill!" she said faintly.

I quickly leaned toward her and put my arm around her slender waist.

"Look up!" I whispered. "It's nothing; be brave! I'm here with you."

She felt better and started to free herself from my arm, but I held her soft, delicate figure in an even closer embrace; my cheek nearly touched hers, from which heat seemed to radiate.

"What are you doing to me?... Oh, Heaven!"...

I paid no attention to her alarm and confusion, and my lips touched her soft cheek. She shuddered but said nothing. We were riding behind the others; no one saw us.

When we got out onto the bank, all the horses were put to a trot. Princess Mary held hers back, and I stayed beside her. It was clear that my silence was making her uneasy, but I swore to myself that I wouldn't say a word—out of curiosity. I wanted to see how she would get out of that awkward situation.

"Either you despise me, or you love me very much!" she said at last, tears in her voice. "Perhaps you want to laugh at me, stir my soul, and then abandon me... That would be so base, so vile, that even the thought... Oh, no!" she added, with tender trust. "There is nothing about me that should keep you from respecting me, is there? Your presumptuous action... I must, I must forgive you for it, because I allowed it... Answer me, speak—I want to hear your voice!"...

Her last words held such feminine impatience that I smiled despite myself; fortunately, dusk was beginning to fall... I said nothing.

"You're silent!" she continued. "Perhaps you want me to be the first to tell you that I love you."...

I remained silent.

"Is that what you want?" she continued, turning quickly toward me.... There was something terrible in the resolve of her gaze and voice.

"Why?" I replied, shrugging.

She struck her horse with her riding whip and galloped off along the narrow, dangerous road. It happened so quickly that I could barely catch up with her, and then only by the time she had rejoined the others.

All the way home she talked and laughed nonstop. Her movements were feverish; she didn't look my way once. Everyone noticed her unusual gaiety. Princess Ligovski rejoiced inwardly as she watched her daughter. But the girl is simply having a fit of nerves: she'll spend a sleepless night and weep.

This thought gives me immeasurable pleasure: there are moments when I understand the Vampire... And yet I'm considered a good fellow, and I try to deserve the name!

After dismounting, the ladies went into Princess Ligovski's house. I was agitated, so I galloped into the mountains to clear my head of the thoughts crowding it. The dewy evening breathed intoxicating coolness. The moon was rising behind the dark peaks. Each step of my unshod horse echoed hollowly in the silent gorges. I watered the horse at the waterfall, then greedily inhaled the fresh air of the southern night once or twice.

I set off on my way back.

I rode through the village. The lights in the windows were beginning to go out; the sentries on the fortress rampart and the Cossacks in the surrounding outposts called to one another in drawn-out voices.

In one of the village houses, built at the edge of a ravine, I noticed an unusually bright light. Now and then I heard discordant voices and shouts, signs of a military drinking party in full swing. I dismounted and crept up to the window. The shutter wasn't fastened, and I could see the revelers and hear what they were saying. They were talking about me.

The captain of dragoons, flushed with wine, struck the table with his fist and demanded attention.

"Gentlemen!" he said. "This won't do! Pechorin must be taught a lesson! These Petersburg fledglings always hold their heads high until someone slaps them down! He thinks that because he always wears clean gloves and polished boots, he's

the only one who's ever lived in society. And what a haughty smile! All the same, I'm convinced he's a coward—yes, a coward!"

"I think so too," said Grushnitski. "He likes to get himself out of trouble by pretending he was only joking. I once gave him such a dressing-down that anyone else in his place would have cut me to pieces on the spot. But Pechorin turned the whole thing into a joke. Of course, I didn't challenge him, since that was his responsibility, but he didn't want anything more to do with it."

"Grushnitski is angry with him for taking Princess Mary away from him," someone said.

"That's a new one! It's true I did pursue Princess Mary a little, but I stopped at once because I don't want to get married; besides, I make it a rule never to compromise a girl."

"Yes, I assure you, he's a first-rate coward—I mean Pechorin, not Grushnitski. Grushnitski is a fine fellow, and besides, he's my true friend!" the captain of dragoons went on.

"Gentlemen! No one here will stand up for him? No one? So much the better! Would you like to test his courage? It would be amusing..."

"We would—but how?"

"Here's what we'll do: Grushnitski in particular is angry with him, so the main part falls to Grushnitski. He'll pick a quarrel over some silly little thing and challenge Pechorin to a duel... Wait—here's where the joke comes in... He'll challenge him to a duel; fine! The whole affair—the challenge, the preparations, the terms—will be as solemn and terrifying as possible. I'll see to that. I'll be your second, my poor friend! All right! But here's the catch: we won't put bullets in the pistols. I'll guarantee Pechorin will turn coward. I'll make them stand six paces apart, devil take it! Are you all agreed, gentlemen?"

"Splendid idea!... Agreed!... Why not?..." came from all sides.

"And you, Grushnitski?"

I waited for Grushnitski's answer, trembling. I was filled with cold rage at the thought that, but for an accident, I might have made myself a laughingstock before those fools. If Grushnitski had refused, I would have thrown my arms around his neck; but after a pause, he rose, held out his hand to the captain, and said very gravely:

"Very well, I agree!"

It would be hard to describe the enthusiasm of that honorable company.

I returned home, shaken by two different feelings. The first was sorrow.

"Why do they all hate me?" I thought. "Why? Have I offended anyone? No. Could I be one of those men whose mere presence is enough to provoke hostility?"

And I felt a venomous rage slowly filling my soul.

"Watch yourself, Mr. Grushnitski!" I said, pacing the room. "You can't joke with me like this! You may pay dearly for winning the approval of your foolish comrades. I'm not your plaything!"...

I didn't sleep at all that night. By daybreak I was as yellow as an orange.

In the morning I met Princess Mary at the well.

"Are you ill?" she said, looking closely at me.

"I didn't sleep last night."

"Neither did I... I was accusing you... perhaps without reason. But explain yourself. I can forgive you anything..."

"Anything?"...

"Anything... Just tell the truth... and hurry... You see, I've been thinking a lot, trying to explain and justify your behavior. Perhaps you're afraid my relatives will object... That won't matter. When they find out..."

Her voice trembled.

"I'll win them over by pleading. Or is it your own situation?... But you know I can sacrifice everything for the man I love... Oh, answer quickly—have pity... You don't despise me, do you?"

She seized my hand.

Princess Ligovski was walking ahead of us with Vera's husband and hadn't seen anything; but some of the invalids strolling about—the most inquisitive gossips of all—might have seen us, so I quickly pulled my hand free of her passionate grasp.

"I'll tell you the whole truth," I answered. "I won't justify myself or explain my actions: I don't love you."

Her lips paled slightly.

"Leave me," she said in a barely audible voice.

I shrugged, turned, and walked away.

Chapter 27

25Th June

I SOMETIMES DESPISE MYSELF... Is that why I despise others too?... I've become incapable of noble impulses; I'm afraid of making myself look ridiculous. In my place, someone else would have offered Princess Mary his heart and fortune; but the word "marry" has a kind of magical power over me. However passionately I love a woman, if she so much as makes me feel that I have to marry her—then farewell, love! My heart turns to stone, and nothing will warm it again. I'm ready for any other sacrifice, but not that; I would stake my life twenty times over—or even my honor—on the turn of a card... but I will never sell my freedom. Why do I value it so highly? What does it mean to me? What am I preparing for? What do I hope for from the future?... In truth, absolutely nothing. It's a kind of inborn dread, an inexplicable prejudice... There are people, you know, who have an irrational fear of spiders, beetles, mice... Shall I confess it? When I was a child, an old woman told my fortune to my mother. She predicted that I would die at the hands of a wicked wife. Her words struck me deeply at the time: an irresistible aversion to marriage took root in my soul... Meanwhile, something tells me her prediction will come true; in any case, I'll try to make sure it happens as late in life as possible.

Chapter 28

26Th June

YESTERDAY, the conjurer Apfelbaum arrived here. A long placard appeared on the restaurant door, informing the most respected public that the above-mentioned marvelous conjurer, acrobat, chemist, and optician would have the honor of giving a magnificent performance this evening at eight o'clock in the Nobles' Club hall (in other words, the restaurant); tickets, two and a half rubles each.

Everyone intends to go and see the marvelous conjurer; even Princess Ligovski has bought a ticket for herself, although her daughter is ill.

After dinner today, I walked past Vera's windows; she was sitting alone on the balcony. A note fell at my feet:

"Come to me at ten o'clock tonight by the main staircase. My husband has gone to Pyatigorsk and won't be back until tomorrow morning. My servants and maids will be out; I've given tickets to all of them, and to the princess's servants too. I'll be waiting for you; be sure to come."

"Aha!" I said to myself. "So it's turned out just as I thought it would."

At eight o'clock I went to see the conjurer. The audience had assembled before nine. The performance began. In the back rows of chairs I recognized Vera's and Princess Ligovski's servants and maids. Every single one of them was there. Grushnitski sat in the front row with his lorgnette, and the

conjurer turned to him whenever he needed a handkerchief, a watch, a ring, or anything else.

For some time now, Grushnitski has stopped bowing to me, and today he looked at me rather insolently once or twice. I'll remember it all when the time comes to settle our scores.

Before ten o'clock struck, I stood up and went out.

It was dark outside, pitch-dark. Cold, heavy clouds hung over the surrounding mountain peaks, and only now and then did the dying breeze rustle the tops of the poplars around the restaurant. People crowded at the windows. I went down the mountain and, turning in through the gate, quickened my pace. Suddenly it seemed someone was following me. I stopped and looked around. It was impossible to make anything out in the darkness. Still, to be cautious, I walked around the house as if taking a stroll. As I passed Princess Mary's windows, I heard steps behind me again; a man wrapped in a cloak ran past. That made me uneasy, but I crept up to the steps and hurried up the dark staircase. A door opened, and a little hand seized mine...

"Has anyone seen you?" Vera whispered, clinging to me.

"No one."

"Now do you believe that I love you? Oh, I've hesitated for so long, tormented myself for so long... But you can do whatever you like with me."

Her heart was pounding, and her hands were as cold as ice. She burst into complaints and jealous accusations. She demanded that I confess everything, saying she would bear my unfaithfulness with patience, because all she wanted was for me to be happy. I didn't quite believe her, but I calmed her with oaths, promises, and the like.

"So you won't marry Mary? You don't love her?... But she thinks... You know, she's madly in love with you, poor girl!"...

Around two in the morning, I opened the window and, after tying two shawls together, lowered myself from the upper balcony to the lower one, holding on to the pillar. A light was

still burning in Princess Mary's room. Something drew me toward that window. The curtain wasn't fully drawn, so I could take a curious look inside. Mary was sitting on her bed, her hands folded on her knees; her thick hair was gathered under a lace-trimmed nightcap; a large crimson shawl covered her white shoulders, and her little feet were tucked into a pair of brightly colored Persian slippers. She sat perfectly still, her head bowed over her chest. An open book lay on the small table before her, but her eyes, fixed and filled with inexpressible grief, seemed for the hundredth time to be scanning the same page while her thoughts were far away.

At that moment, someone stirred behind a shrub. I leaped from the balcony onto the lawn. An unseen hand grabbed my shoulder.

"Aha!" said a rough voice. "Caught you!... I'll teach you to sneak into princesses' rooms at night!"

"Hold him!" cried another, springing out from a corner.

It was Grushnitski and the dragoon captain.

I punched the latter in the head, knocked him down, and darted into the bushes. I knew all the garden paths along the slope opposite our houses.

"Thieves! Guards!"... they shouted.

A gunshot rang out; a smoking wad landed almost at my feet.

Within a minute I was in my room, undressed and in bed. My servant had just locked the door when Grushnitski and the captain began pounding on it.

"Pechorin! Are you asleep? Are you there?"... the captain shouted.

"I'm in bed," I answered angrily.

"Get up! Thieves!... Circassians!"...

"I have a cold," I answered. "I'm afraid of catching a chill."

They went away. Answering them had done me no good; if I hadn't, they would have kept searching for me in the garden for another hour or so.

Meanwhile, the alarm grew deafening. A Cossack galloped over from the fortress. Everyone was in an uproar; they searched every shrub for Circassians—and, of course, found none. Still, quite a few people were probably left convinced that if the garrison had acted with a little more courage and speed, at least twenty brigands would have lost their lives trying to escape.

Chapter 29

June 27

THIS MORNING, at the well, everyone was talking about the Circassian attack during the night. I drank the prescribed number of glasses of Narzan water and, after strolling a few times along the long linden avenue, met Vera's husband, who had just arrived from Pyatigorsk. He took my arm, and we went to the restaurant for breakfast. He was terribly worried about his wife.

"What a terrible fright she had last night," he said. "Of course, it had to happen just when I was away."

We sat down to breakfast near the door to a corner room where about a dozen young men were sitting. Grushnitski was among them. For the second time, fate gave me the chance to overhear a conversation that would decide his fate. He didn't see me, so I couldn't suspect he had planned it; but that only made his fault seem greater in my eyes.

"Could they really have been Circassians?" someone said. "Did anyone see them?"

"I'll tell you the whole truth," Grushnitski replied. "Just don't give me away. Here's what happened: yesterday, a certain man, whose name I won't tell you, came to me and said that at ten that evening he had seen someone sneaking into the Ligovskis' house. I should mention that Princess Ligovski was here, and Princess Mary was at home. So he and I went to wait under the windows and catch the lucky fellow."

I admit, I was frightened, though my companion was absorbed in his breakfast. He might have heard things he would have found rather upsetting if Grushnitski had guessed the truth; but blinded by jealousy, Grushnitski didn't even suspect it.

"So, you see," Grushnitski continued, "we set out with a gun loaded with blanks, just to scare him. We waited in the garden until two. At last—goodness knows where he came from, but he must have come through the glass door behind the pillar; he didn't come through the window, since it had remained shut—at last, as I was saying, we saw someone climbing down from the balcony... What do you think of Princess Mary, eh? Well, I admit, it's hardly what you'd expect from Moscow ladies! What can you believe after that? We were going to grab him, but he broke free and darted into the bushes like a hare. So I fired at him."

There was a general murmur of disbelief.

"You don't believe me?" he continued. "I give you my word of honor as a gentleman that it's all perfectly true. And to prove it, I'll tell you the man's name if you like."

"Tell us, tell us, who was it?" voices called from all sides.

"Pechorin," Grushnitski replied.

At that moment he looked up—I was standing in the doorway opposite him. His face turned bright red. I went over to him and said slowly and clearly:

"I'm very sorry I didn't come in before you gave your word of honor to support such a vile slander. My presence would have spared you that further act of baseness."

Grushnitski jumped up and seemed ready to fly into a rage.

"I beg you," I continued in the same tone, "to retract what you've said at once. You know very well it's all made up. I don't think a woman's indifference to your brilliant qualities deserves such a terrible revenge. Think carefully: if you stick to this,

you'll lose the right to call yourself a gentleman and put your life at risk."

Grushnitski stood before me in great agitation, his eyes lowered. But the struggle between his conscience and his vanity didn't last long. The dragoon captain sitting beside him nudged him with his elbow. Grushnitski started, then answered quickly without looking up:

"My dear sir, I mean what I say, and I'm prepared to repeat it... I'm not afraid of your threats, and I'm ready for anything."

"You've already proved the last part," I answered coldly. I took the dragoon captain by the arm and left the room.

"What do you want?" the captain asked.

"You're Grushnitski's friend, and I assume you'll be his second?"

The captain bowed gravely.

"You've guessed right," he replied.

"Besides, I have to be his second, since the insult to him concerns me too. I was with him last night," he added, straightening his bent frame.

"Ah! So you're the one whose head I hit so clumsily?"...

His face turned yellow, then blue; suppressed rage showed in his expression.

"I'll have the honor of sending my second to you today," I added, bowing to him with great politeness as I took my leave, without seeming to notice his fury.

On the restaurant steps I met Vera's husband. Apparently, he had been waiting for me.

He seized my hand with something close to rapture.

"Noble young man!" he said, tears in his eyes. "I've heard everything. What a scoundrel! An ingrate!... Just imagine people like that being welcomed into a decent household after this! Thank God I have no daughters! But the woman for whom you're risking your life will reward you. You can count on my absolute discretion," he continued. "I've been young

myself and served in the army: I know these affairs have to run their course. Goodbye."

Poor fellow! He's glad he has no daughters!...

I went straight to Werner, found him at home, and told him the whole story—my relationships with Vera and Princess Mary, and the conversation I had overheard, which had revealed these gentlemen's plan to make a fool of me by forcing me to fight a duel with blank cartridges. But now the affair had gone beyond a joke; they probably hadn't expected it to turn out this way.

The doctor agreed to be my second; I gave him a few instructions about the terms of the duel. He was to insist that everything be handled as secretly as possible, because although I'm ready to face death at any moment, I have no desire to ruin my future in this world forever.

After that I went home. An hour later the doctor returned from his errand.

"There really is a conspiracy against you," he said. "I found the dragoon captain at Grushnitski's, along with another gentleman whose last name I can't remember. I paused in the anteroom to take off my galoshes. They were arguing and making a terrible racket. 'I won't agree to it under any circumstances,' Grushnitski was saying. 'He insulted me publicly; it was quite different before'...

"'What does it matter to you?' the captain replied. 'I'll take full responsibility. I've been second in five duels, and I think I know how to arrange things. I've worked it all out. Please, just leave me alone. It does no harm to frighten people a little. And why put yourself in danger if you can avoid it?'...

"At that moment I entered the room. They fell silent at once. Our negotiations dragged on for a while. At last we settled the matter this way: about five versts from here there's a hollow gorge; they'll ride there tomorrow at four in the morning, and we'll leave half an hour later. You'll fire at six

paces—Grushnitski himself insisted on that condition. Whichever of you is killed, his death will be blamed on the Circassians. Now I must tell you what I suspect: they—that is, the seconds—may have changed their original plan and may intend to load only Grushnitski's pistol. That's practically murder, but in wartime, especially in Asian warfare, such tricks are allowed. Grushnitski, however, seems a little more honorable than his companions. What do you think? Shouldn't we let them see that we've guessed their plan?"

"Absolutely not, doctor! Don't worry; I won't give in to them."

"But what are you going to do, then?"

"That's my secret."

"Be careful they don't catch you... six paces, remember!"

"Doctor, I'll expect you tomorrow at four. The horses will be ready... Goodbye."

I stayed inside until evening, with my door locked. A servant came to invite me to Princess Ligovski's; I told him to say I was ill.

Two in the morning... I can't sleep... Yet I need sleep if I'm to have a steady hand tomorrow. Still, at six paces it's hard to miss. Aha! Mr. Grushnitski, your tricks won't work!... We'll switch roles: now I'll be the one looking for signs of hidden terror on your pale face. Why did you choose those fatal six paces yourself? Do you think I'll meekly offer my forehead as your target?...

No, we'll draw lots... And then—then—what if luck is on his side? What if my star finally betrays me?... And no wonder if it does: it has served my whims faithfully for so long.

Well? If I have to die, so be it! The world won't lose much, and I'm already thoroughly tired of everything. I'm like a guest at a ball who yawns but doesn't go to bed simply because his carriage hasn't arrived. But now the carriage is here... Goodbye!...

I relive my whole past in memory, and involuntarily ask myself: 'Why have I lived—what was I born for?'... There must have been a purpose, and surely I was meant for something great, because I feel powers beyond measure within my soul... But I couldn't discover that destiny. I let myself be swept away by the allure of passions, empty and base. I emerged from their crucible hard and cold as iron, but the glow of noble aspirations —the fairest flower of life—was gone forever. And from then on, how often have I played the role of an axe in the hands of fate! Like an instrument of punishment, I have fallen on the heads of doomed victims, often without malice, always without pity... My love has brought happiness to no one, because I have never sacrificed anything for those I loved: I have loved only for myself, for my own pleasure. I have merely satisfied the strange craving of my heart, greedily draining their feelings, their tenderness, their joys, their sufferings—and I have never been able to satisfy myself. I am like someone who, exhausted by hunger, falls asleep and dreams of sumptuous dishes and sparkling wines; he devours the airy gifts of imagination with delight, and his pain seems somewhat eased. Let him wake, though: the vision vanishes, and only twice the hunger and despair remain!

And tomorrow, perhaps, I'll die!... And not one person on earth will be left who has fully understood me. Some will think me worse than I really was, others better... Some will say, 'He was a good fellow'; others, 'A villain.' Both descriptions will be false. After all this, is life worth the trouble? And yet we live—out of curiosity! We expect something new... How absurd, and yet how maddening!

Chapter 30

IT HAS NOW BEEN A month and a half since I arrived at the N —— Fortress.

Maksim Maksimych is out hunting... I'm alone. I'm sitting by the window. Gray clouds have covered the mountains down to their base; the sun appears through the mist as a yellow spot. It's cold; the wind whistles and rattles the shutters... I'm bored!... I'll continue my diary, interrupted by so many strange events.

I reread the last page: how ridiculous it seems!... I thought I was going to die; it wasn't to be. I haven't yet drained the cup of suffering, and now I feel I still have a long life ahead of me.

How clearly and sharply all these past events are stamped in my memory! Time hasn't erased a single line or a single shade.

I remember that I didn't sleep a single moment on the night before the duel. I couldn't write for long; a secret uneasiness had taken hold of me. I paced the room for about an hour, then sat down and opened a novel by Walter Scott that was lying on my table. It was The Scottish Puritans. At first I read with effort; then, swept up in the spell of the fiction, I forgot everything else.

At last day broke. My nerves settled. I looked in the mirror: my face was dull and pale, still marked by the strain of a sleepless night; but my eyes, though ringed with a brownish shadow, gleamed proudly and without mercy. I was satisfied with myself.

I ordered the horses saddled, got dressed, and hurried down to the baths. Plunging into the cold, sparkling water of the Narzan Spring, I felt my physical and mental strength return. I left the baths feeling as fresh and vigorous as if I were going to a ball. After that, who can say the soul doesn't depend on the body!...

When I returned, I found the doctor in my rooms. He was wearing gray riding breeches, a jacket, and a Circassian cap. I burst out laughing at the little figure beneath that enormous shaggy cap. Werner was not at all warlike in appearance, and that day his face was longer than usual.

"Why so sad, doctor?" I said. "Haven't you escorted people to the other world a hundred times, with complete indifference? Imagine that I have a bilious fever: I may recover, or I may die; either outcome is perfectly normal. Try to think of me as a patient suffering from an illness you haven't encountered before—and then your curiosity will be thoroughly aroused. You can make some important physiological observations on me now... Isn't the prospect of a violent death itself a real illness?"

The doctor was struck by the idea and brightened up.

We mounted our horses. Werner gripped his reins with both hands, and we set off. In no time we had galloped past the fortress and through the village, then ridden into the gorge. Our winding road was half-covered with tall grass and crossed every few moments by a noisy brook, which we had to ford, much to the doctor's dismay, because his horse stopped in the water every time.

I cannot remember a morning fresher or bluer! The sun had barely shown its face above the green peaks, and the mingling of the first warmth of its rays with the night's fading coolness filled me with a kind of sweet languor. The cheerful light of the young day had not yet reached the gorge; it gilded only the cliff tops hanging over us on either side. At the slightest breath

of wind, the tufted shrubs growing in the deep crevices showered us with drops of dew. I remember that on that occasion I loved Nature more than ever before. How curiously I examined each dewdrop trembling on a broad vine leaf and reflecting millions of rainbow-colored rays! How eagerly my gaze tried to pierce the smoky distance! There the road grew narrower and narrower, the cliffs bluer and more forbidding, until at last they seemed to meet in an impenetrable wall.

We rode in silence.

"Have you made your will?" Werner suddenly asked.

"No."

"And if you're killed?"

"My heirs will turn up on their own."

"Is it possible you have no friends you'd like to send a last farewell to?"...

I shook my head.

"Is there really not one woman in the world to whom you'd like to leave some keepsake?"...

"Do you want me to bare my soul to you, doctor?" I answered... "You see, I've outlived the years when people die with their beloved's name on their lips, leaving a friend a lock of pomaded—or unpomaded—hair. When I think death may be near, I think only of myself; others don't even do that much. The friends who will forget me tomorrow or, worse, tell who knows what lies about me; the women who, while embracing someone else, will laugh at me so as not to make him jealous of the dead—let them go! From life's storm I have carried away only a few ideas—and not one feeling. For a long time now I've lived not with my heart, but with my head. I weigh and analyze my own passions and actions with cold curiosity, but without sympathy. There are two selves within me: one lives—in the fullest sense of the word—the other reflects on him and judges him. The first may, in an hour, say farewell to you and the world forever, and the second—the second?... Look, doctor,

do you see those three dark figures on the cliff to the right? I suppose they're our opponents?"...

We rode on.

Three horses were tethered in the bushes at the foot of the cliff. We tethered ours there too, then climbed the narrow path to the ledge, where Grushnitski was waiting with the captain of dragoons and his other second, whom they called Ivan Ignatevich. I never learned his surname.

"We've been expecting you for quite a while," said the captain of dragoons with an ironic smile.

I took out my watch and showed him the time.

He apologized, saying his watch was fast.

An awkward silence lasted for a few moments. At last the doctor broke it.

"It seems to me," he said, turning to Grushnitski, "that since you have both shown your willingness to fight, and thus fulfilled the demands of honor, perhaps you can explain yourselves to each other and settle the matter peacefully."

"I'm ready," I said.

The captain winked at Grushnitski, who, thinking I was losing my nerve, put on a haughty air, though until then his cheeks had been pale. For the first time since we arrived, he looked me in the eye; but there was unease in his glance, betraying an inner struggle.

"State your terms," he said, "and anything I can do for you, rest assured..."

"Here are my terms: today, in public, you will take back your slander and apologize to me..."

"My dear sir, how dare you make such a proposal to me?"

"What else could I propose?"...

"We'll fight."

I shrugged.

"So be it; just remember, one of us will certainly be killed."

"I hope it's you..."

"And I'm convinced of the opposite..."

He grew flustered, turned red, then burst into a forced laugh.

The captain took him by the arm and led him aside; they whispered together for a long time. I had arrived in a fairly peaceful frame of mind, but all this was beginning to make me furious.

The doctor came up to me.

"Listen," he said, visibly uneasy, "you've surely forgotten their conspiracy!... I don't know how to load a pistol, but in this case... You're a strange man! Tell them you know what they intend—and they won't dare... What fun! To shoot you like a bird..."

"Please don't worry, doctor. Wait a little... I'll arrange everything so they have no advantage. Let them whisper..."

"Gentlemen, this is getting tedious," I said loudly. "If we're going to fight, let's fight; you had all yesterday to talk as much as you wanted."

"We're ready," the captain replied. "Take your places, gentlemen! Doctor, please measure six paces..."

"Take your places!" Ivan Ignatevich repeated in a squeaky voice.

"Excuse me!" I said. "One more condition. Since we're going to fight to the death, we must do everything possible to keep the affair secret and ensure that our seconds bear no responsibility. Do you agree?"...

"Certainly."

"Well, then, here's my idea. Do you see that narrow ledge at the top of the sheer cliff on the right? It must be thirty fathoms or more to the bottom, and there are sharp rocks below. Each of us will stand right at the edge of the ledge—so that even a slight wound will be fatal. That should suit you, since you yourselves set the distance at six paces. Whoever is wounded

will certainly fall and be smashed to pieces; the doctor will remove the bullet, and then it will be easy to explain the sudden death as the result of a fall. Let's draw lots to decide who fires first. Finally, I declare that I will fight on no other terms."

"So be it!" said the captain after exchanging a meaningful glance with Grushnitski, who nodded in agreement. His expression changed from moment to moment. I had put him in an awkward position. If the duel had followed the usual rules, he could have aimed at my leg, wounded me slightly, and satisfied his revenge without weighing too heavily on his conscience. But now he had to fire into the air, make himself a murderer, or abandon his vile plan and expose himself to the same danger as me. I wouldn't have wanted to be in his place just then. He took the captain aside and spoke to him heatedly. His lips were blue, and I saw them trembling; but the captain turned away from him with a contemptuous smile.

"You're a fool," he said to Grushnitski, rather loudly. "You can't understand anything!... Let's go, then, gentlemen!"

A narrow path through the bushes led to the precipice, and fragments of rock formed the precarious steps of this natural staircase. Clinging to the bushes, we climbed up. Grushnitski went first, his seconds behind him, then the doctor and I.

"I'm surprised at you," said the doctor, squeezing my hand hard. "Let me feel your pulse!... Ah! You're feverish!... But there's nothing unusual in your face... only your eyes are shining more brightly than usual."

Suddenly, small stones came tumbling noisily right beneath our feet. What had happened? Grushnitski had stumbled; the branch he was holding had broken, and he would have rolled down on his back if his seconds hadn't caught him.

"Careful!" I cried. "Don't fall before your time: it's a bad omen. Remember Julius Caesar!"

Chapter 31

NOW WE HAD CLIMBED TO the top of the jutting cliff. The ledge was covered with fine sand, as if it had been prepared for a duel. All around us, like an innumerable herd, the mountains crowded together, their summits lost in the golden haze of morning; to the south rose the white mass of Elbrus, closing the chain of icy peaks, among which fibrous clouds that had swept in from the east were already roaming. I walked to the edge of the ledge and looked down. My head nearly swam. At the foot of the precipice, everything seemed as dark and cold as a tomb; the moss-grown jagged rocks, hurled down by storm and time, waited for their prey.

The ledge where we were to fight formed an almost regular triangle. Six paces were measured from the projecting corner, and it was decided that the one who had to face his opponent's fire first would stand right in the corner, with his back to the precipice; if he was not killed, the opponents would switch places.

I decided to give Grushnitski every advantage; I wanted to test him. A spark of magnanimity might awaken in his soul—and then everything would have been settled for the best. But his vanity and weakness of character were bound to triumph!... I wanted to give myself the full right not to spare him if fate favored me. Who wouldn't have made such an agreement with his conscience?

"Cast the lot, doctor!" said the captain.

The doctor took a silver coin from his pocket and held it up.

"Tails!" Grushnitski cried hastily, like a man suddenly stirred by a friendly nudge.

"Heads," I said.

The coin spun through the air and fell with a jingle. We all rushed toward it.

"You're lucky," I said to Grushnitski. "You get to fire first! But remember, if you don't kill me, I won't miss—I give you my word of honor."

He flushed; he was ashamed to kill an unarmed man. I looked steadily at him; for a moment, it seemed to me that he would throw himself at my feet and beg forgiveness. But how could he confess to such a base plot?... He had only one way out—to fire into the air! I was sure he would fire into the air! Only one thought might stop him: that I would demand a second duel.

"Now's the time!" the doctor whispered, tugging at my sleeve. "If you don't tell them now that we know their intentions, all is lost. Look, he's already loading... If you won't say anything, I will"...

"Absolutely not, doctor!" I answered, holding him back by the arm. "You'll ruin everything. You gave me your word not to interfere... What does it matter to you? Perhaps I want to be killed"...

He looked at me in astonishment.

"Oh, that's different!... Just don't blame me in the next world"...

Meanwhile, the captain had loaded his pistols and handed one to Grushnitski after whispering something to him with a smile; he gave the other to me.

I took my place in the corner of the ledge, planted my left foot firmly against the rock, and leaned slightly forward so that, if I were only slightly wounded, I wouldn't fall backward.

Grushnitski took his place opposite me and, at the signal, began to raise his pistol. His knees were shaking. He aimed straight at my forehead... Uncontrollable fury began to seethe inside me.

Suddenly he lowered the pistol's muzzle and, pale as a sheet, turned to his second.

"I can't," he said in a hollow voice.

"Coward!" the captain replied.

A shot rang out. The bullet grazed my knee. Without thinking, I took a few steps forward to get away from the edge as quickly as possible.

"Well, my dear Grushnitski, it's a pity you missed!" said the captain. "Now it's your turn; take your place! Embrace me first: we'll never see each other again!"

They embraced; the captain could barely keep from laughing.

"Don't be afraid," he added, giving Grushnitski a sly glance. "Everything in this world is nonsense... Nature is a fool, fate a turkey hen, and life a kopeck!"

After that tragic phrase, delivered with fitting gravity, he returned to his place. Ivan Ignatevich also embraced Grushnitski, in tears, and then the latter stood alone, facing me. Ever since, I have tried to explain to myself what feeling was boiling inside me at that moment: wounded vanity, contempt, and anger at the thought that the man now looking at me with such confidence, such quiet insolence, had been about to kill me like a dog two minutes earlier, without exposing himself to the slightest danger. If I had been wounded a little more severely in the leg, I would inevitably have fallen over the cliff.

For a few moments I looked him steadily in the face, trying to find even the slightest trace of remorse. But it seemed to me he was holding back a smile.

"I'd advise you to say a prayer before you die," I said.

"Don't worry about my soul any more than your own. I ask only one thing of you: fire quickly."

"And you don't take back your slander? You don't ask my forgiveness?... Think carefully: doesn't your conscience have anything to say to you?"

"Mr. Pechorin!" exclaimed the captain of dragoons. "Allow me to point out that you're not here to preach... Let's not waste time, in case someone rides through the gorge and sees us."

"Very well. Doctor, come here!"

The doctor came over to me. Poor doctor! He was paler than Grushnitski had been ten minutes earlier.

I deliberately spoke the words that followed with a pause between each one—loudly and clearly, like a death sentence being pronounced:

"Doctor, these gentlemen have surely forgotten in their haste to put a bullet in my pistol. Please load it again—and properly!"

"Impossible!" cried the captain. "Impossible! I loaded both pistols. Perhaps the bullet rolled out of yours... That's not my fault! And you have no right to load again... No right at all. It's entirely against the rules; I won't allow it"...

"Very well!" I said to the captain. "In that case, you and I will fight on equal terms"...

He stopped dead.

Grushnitski stood with his head bowed, embarrassed and gloomy.

"Let them be!" he said at last to the captain, who was about to take my pistol from the doctor's hands. "You know perfectly well they're right."

The captain made various signs to him in vain. Grushnitski wouldn't even look at him.

Meanwhile, the doctor had loaded the pistol and handed it to me. When he saw that, the captain spat and stamped his foot.

"Then you're a fool, my friend," he said, "a complete fool!... You trusted me before, so you should obey me in everything now... But you deserve what you get! Die like a fly!"...

He turned away, muttering as he went:

"But even so, it's absolutely against the rules."

"Grushnitski!" I said. "There's still time: take back your slander, and I'll forgive you everything. You haven't succeeded in making a fool of me; my self-respect is satisfied. Remember —we were once friends"...

His face flushed, and his eyes flashed.

"Fire!" he answered. "I despise myself, and I hate you. If you don't kill me, I'll lie in wait for you one night and cut your throat. There's no room on earth for both of us"...

I fired.

When the smoke cleared, Grushnitski was no longer on the ledge. Only a slender column of dust still swirled at the edge of the precipice.

The others cried out all at once.

"The comedy is over!" I said to the doctor.

He didn't answer, and turned away in horror.

I shrugged and bowed to Grushnitski's seconds.

Chapter 32

AS I DESCENDED THE PATH, I saw Grushnitski's bloodstained corpse between the rock crevices. I closed my eyes without thinking.

I untied my horse and set off home at a walk. A stone weighed on my heart. The sun seemed dim to me; its rays had no power to warm me.

I did not ride up to the village but turned right, along the gorge. Seeing anyone would have been painful to me: I wanted to be alone. I let the reins fall and bowed my head over my chest as I rode for a long time. At last I found myself somewhere entirely unfamiliar. I turned my horse around and began looking for the road. By the time I rode into Kislovodsk, the sun had set—and both my horse and I were utterly exhausted!

My servant told me Werner had called and handed me two notes: one from Werner, the other... from Vera.

I opened the first. It read:

"Everything has been arranged as well as possible. The mutilated body has been brought in, and the bullet extracted from the chest. Everyone is convinced that death was caused by an unfortunate accident; only the Commandant, who must have known about your quarrel, shook his head, but said nothing. There is no evidence against you at all, and you may sleep in peace... if you can.... Farewell!"...

For a long time I could not bring myself to open the second note... What could she have written to me?... My soul was stirred by a painful foreboding.

Here it is, that letter, every word of which is indelibly engraved in my memory:

"I am writing to you in the firm knowledge that we will never see each other again. A few years ago, when I parted from you, I thought the same. But Heaven has willed that I be tested a second time: I have not been able to endure the trial; my frail heart has once again yielded to that familiar voice... You will not despise me for that, will you? This letter will be both a farewell and a confession: I must tell you everything I have kept in my heart since it began to love you. I will not blame you—you acted toward me as any other man would have; you loved me as a possession, as a source of joys, anxieties, and griefs, each replacing the other, without which life would be dull and monotonous. I understood all that from the start... But you were unhappy, and I sacrificed myself, hoping that one day you would appreciate my sacrifice, that one day you would understand my deep, unconditional tenderness. A long time has passed since then: I have fathomed all the secrets of your soul... and I have convinced myself that my hope was vain. It was a bitter blow! But my love has been grafted onto my soul; it has grown dark, but has not been extinguished.

"We are parting forever; yet you may be sure that I will never love another. My soul has spent all its treasures, its tears, its hopes on you. A woman who has once loved you cannot look at other men without a certain disdain—not because you are better than they, oh no! but because there is something peculiar in your nature, something that belongs to you alone, something proud and mysterious; in your voice, whatever you say, there is an irresistible power. No one can wish so constantly to be loved; in no one is wickedness so attractive; no one's glance promises so much bliss; no one can make better use of his advantages; and no one can be so truly unhappy as you, because no one tries so earnestly to convince himself otherwise.

"Now I must explain why I am leaving in such haste; it will seem unimportant to you, because it concerns only me.

"This morning my husband came in and told me about your quarrel with Grushnitski. I must have changed color greatly, because he looked at me long and intently. I almost fainted at the thought that you had to fight a duel today, and that I was the cause of it; I thought I would go mad... But now, when I can think clearly, I am sure you are still alive: it is impossible that you should die while I remain alive—not possible! My husband paced the room for a long time. I do not know what he said to me; I cannot remember what I answered... Most likely I told him I loved you... I only remember that, at the end of our conversation, he insulted me with a dreadful word and left the room. I heard him order the carriage... I have been sitting by the window for three hours, waiting for you to return... But you are alive; you cannot have died!... The carriage is almost ready... Good-bye, good-bye!... I am lost—but what does it matter? If only I could be sure that you will always remember me—I no longer say love me—no, only remember me... Good-bye, they are coming!... I must hide this letter.

"You do not love Mary, do you? You will not marry her? Listen, you must make that sacrifice for me. I have lost everything in the world for you"...

Like a madman, I raced down the steps, leapt onto my Circassian horse, which was being led around the courtyard, and set off at full gallop along the road to Pyatigorsk. I drove the exhausted horse mercilessly; snorting and covered in foam, it carried me swiftly along the rocky road.

The sun had already disappeared behind a black cloud resting on the ridge of the western mountains; the gorge grew dark and damp. The Podkumok, forcing its way over the rocks, roared with a hollow, monotonous sound. I galloped on, choking with impatience. The thought that I might not find

Vera in Pyatigorsk struck my heart like a hammer. Just one minute—to see her again for one minute, say farewell, press her hand... I prayed, cursed, wept, laughed... No, nothing could express my anxiety, my despair!... Now that it seemed possible I might lose her forever, Vera became dearer to me than anything in the world—dearer than life, honor, happiness! God knows what strange, mad plans swarmed in my head... Meanwhile, I kept galloping, urging on my horse without mercy. Soon I began to notice that it was breathing more heavily; it had already stumbled once or twice on level ground... I was five versts from Essentuki, a Cossack village where I could change horses.

Everything would have been saved if my horse had been able to hold out for another ten minutes. But suddenly, as he lifted himself out of a little gully where the road makes a sharp turn as it emerges from the mountains, he fell to the ground. I jumped down at once and tried to lift him, tugging at his bridle—in vain. A barely audible moan escaped through his clenched teeth; a few moments later, he died. I was left alone on the steppe; my last hope was gone. I tried to walk, but my legs gave way beneath me. Exhausted by the day's anxieties and lack of sleep, I fell onto the wet grass and burst into tears like a child.

For a long time I lay motionless, weeping bitterly, without trying to hold back my tears or sobs. I thought my chest would burst. All my resolve, all my composure, vanished like smoke; my soul was powerless, my reason fell silent, and anyone who had seen me at that moment would have turned away in contempt.

When the night dew and mountain breeze had cooled my burning brow and my thoughts had returned to their usual course, I realized that pursuing my lost happiness would be pointless and unreasonable. What more did I want? To see her? Why? Was it not all over between us? One bitter farewell kiss

would not have enriched my memories, and afterward parting would only have been harder for us.

Still, I am glad I can weep. Perhaps, though, the reason was my shattered nerves, a sleepless night, two minutes facing the muzzle of a pistol, and an empty stomach.

It is all for the best. That new suffering gave me a fortunate diversion—to put it in military terms. Weeping is healthy; and no doubt, if I had not ridden as I did and then been forced to walk fifteen versts on my way back, I would not have fallen asleep that night either.

I returned to Kislovodsk at five in the morning, threw myself onto my bed, and slept like Napoleon after Waterloo.

By the time I woke, it was dark outside. I sat by the open window, my jacket unbuttoned, as the mountain breeze cooled my chest, still weighed down by the heavy sleep of exhaustion. In the distance, beyond the river, lights flickered in the fortress and the village through the tops of the thick lime trees that shaded it. Nearby, everything was quiet. Princess Ligovski's house was dark.

The doctor came in, his brows furrowed; unlike usual, he did not offer me his hand.

"Where have you come from, doctor?"

"From Princess Ligovski's. Her daughter is ill—nervous exhaustion... But that is not the point. This is what I came to tell you: the authorities are suspicious, and although nothing can be proved, I would advise you to be cautious all the same. Princess Ligovski told me today that she knew you had fought a duel over her daughter. That little old man—what's his name?—has told her everything. He witnessed your quarrel with Grushnitski at the restaurant. I came to warn you. Farewell. Perhaps we will not meet again: you will be exiled somewhere."

He stopped at the threshold; he would gladly have pressed my hand... and if I had shown the slightest desire to embrace

him, he would have thrown himself into my arms. But I remained cold as a rock, and he left the room.

That's just like men! They're all the same: they know in advance everything that's wrong with an action, yet they help, advise, and even encourage it, seeing that there's no other way —and then they wash their hands of the whole affair and turn indignantly away from the person who had the courage to take full responsibility. They're all like that, even the kindest and wisest...

Chapter 33

THE NEXT MORNING, after receiving orders from the highest authority to go to the N——Fortress, I called on Princess Ligovski to say goodbye.

She was surprised when, in answer to her question about whether I had anything important to tell her, I said I had come to say goodbye, and so on.

"But I must have a very serious talk with you."

I sat down without a word.

She clearly didn't know how to begin. Her face turned livid; she tapped the table with her plump fingers. At last, in a broken voice, she said:

"Listen, Monsieur Pechorin, I think you're a gentleman."

I bowed.

"No, I'm sure of it," she went on, "although your behavior is somewhat equivocal. But you may have reasons I don't know, and you must tell me what they are now. You protected my daughter from slander; you fought a duel on her behalf—so you risked your life... Don't answer. I know you won't admit it because Grushnitski was killed"—she crossed herself. "May God forgive him—and you too, I hope... That's not for me to judge... I daren't condemn you, because my daughter, though innocently, was the cause. She's told me everything... everything, I think. You declared your love for her... She admitted she loves you."—Here Princess Ligovski sighed deeply.—"But she's ill, and I'm certain it's no ordinary illness! Secret grief is killing her. She won't confess, but I'm convinced you're the

cause... Listen: perhaps you think I'm after status or immense wealth—don't be mistaken; my daughter's happiness is all I want. Your present circumstances are unfortunate, but they can improve: you have means; my daughter loves you; she was raised to make her husband happy. I'm wealthy, and she's my only child... Tell me, what's holding you back?... You see, I shouldn't be saying all this to you, but I'm relying on your heart, on your honor—remember, she's my only daughter... my only one"...

She burst into tears.

"Princess," I said, "I can't answer you. Let me speak to your daughter alone"...

"Never!" she cried, rising from her chair in great agitation.

"As you wish," I replied, getting ready to leave.

She fell silent, gestured for me to wait a moment, and left the room.

Five minutes passed. My heart was pounding, but my thoughts were calm and my head clear. However hard I searched my heart for even a spark of love for the charming Mary, I found none!

Then the door opened, and she came in. Heavens! How she had changed since I last saw her—and that was only a short time ago!

When she reached the middle of the room, she staggered. I jumped up, offered her my arm, and led her to a chair.

I stood facing her. For a long time we said nothing. Her large eyes, full of indescribable grief, seemed to search mine for some glimmer of hope; her pale lips tried in vain to smile; her delicate hands, folded on her knees, were so thin and transparent that I pitied her.

"Princess," I said, "you know I've been making fun of you?... You must despise me."

A sickly blush spread across her cheeks.

"So," I continued, "you can't love me"...

She turned her head away, leaned her elbows on the table, covered her eyes with her hand, and seemed about to cry.

"Oh, God!" she said, almost inaudibly.

The situation was becoming unbearable. Another minute, and I would have fallen at her feet.

"So you see for yourself," I said as firmly as I could, with a forced smile, "you see for yourself that I can't marry you. Even if you wanted it now, you'd soon regret it. My conversation with your mother has forced me to explain myself to you so frankly and so brutally. I hope she's mistaken; it will be easy for you to set her straight. You see, in your eyes I'm playing a most wretched and ugly role, and I admit it—that's the most I can do for your sake. However badly you may think of me, I accept it... You see that I'm vile in your eyes, don't you?... Isn't it true that, even if you loved me, you would despise me from now on?"...

She turned toward me. She was pale as marble, but her eyes shone with an extraordinary light.

"I hate you," she said...

I thanked her, bowed respectfully, and left the room.

An hour later, an express carriage was carrying me rapidly away from Kislovodsk. A few versts from Essentuki, I recognized my spirited horse's body beside the road. The saddle had been removed, no doubt by a passing Cossack, and two ravens sat on the horse's back in its place. I sighed and turned away...

And now, here in this dreary fortress, I often ask myself as I look back on the past: why didn't I want to take the path destiny had opened before me, where gentle joys and peace of mind awaited me?... No, I could never have grown used to such a fate! I'm like a sailor born and raised on the deck of a pirate brig: his soul has grown accustomed to storms and battles, but let him be cast ashore, and he chafes and wastes away, however enticing the shady groves, however brightly the

peaceful sun shines. All day long he paces the sandy shore, listens to the monotonous roar of the advancing waves, and gazes into the misty distance. Look! Out there, on the pale line dividing the blue sea from the gray clouds, isn't the longed-for sail glimmering? At first it's like a seagull's wing, but little by little it separates from the foam of the waves and steadily approaches the empty harbor.

Preface to the Second Edition

(By the Author)

A BOOK'S PREFACE SERVES AS both prologue and epilogue. It gives the author a chance to explain the work's purpose, defend himself, or answer his critics. Usually, though, readers care neither about a book's moral purpose nor about the attacks of the reviewers, so the preface goes unread. Still, that's a pity, especially here in Russia! Our public is so young, not to say simpleminded, that it can't understand a fable unless the moral is spelled out at the end. Unable to recognize a joke or appreciate irony, it has, in short, been badly brought up. It hasn't yet learned that in a decent book, as in decent society, open abuse has no place; that our modern civilization has invented a sharper weapon, no less deadly for being almost invisible, which strikes with sure and irresistible force under the cloak of flattery. The Russian public is like a simple country person who happens to overhear a conversation between two diplomats from hostile courts and comes away convinced that each has been deceiving his government for the sake of a deeply affectionate private friendship.

Some readers, and even reviewers, have recently shown the unfortunate effects of taking words too literally in their response to this book. Many readers have been deeply—and quite seriously—shocked to find such an immoral man as Pechorin presented as an example. Others have perceptively remarked that the author has painted his own portrait and those

of his acquaintances!... What a tired, wretched joke! But apparently Russia is constituted in such a way that absurdities like these will never disappear. It's doubtful that even the most ethereal fairy tale could escape accusations of making offensive personal attacks in this country.

Pechorin, gentlemen, is indeed a portrait, but not of any one man. He is a composite portrait, made up of all the vices that have flourished to their full extent among the present generation. You will tell me, as you have before, that no one can be so bad; and I will reply: "If you believe that the villains of tragedy and romance could exist in real life, why can't you believe Pechorin is real? If you admire fictions that are far more terrible and monstrous, why can't you grant this character a hearing, even as a mere creature of the imagination? Is it not because there is more truth in him than you may find entirely comfortable?"

You will say that this book does nothing to advance morality. I beg your pardon. People have had their fill of sweets, and their digestion is ruined; bitter medicines—sharp truths—are therefore necessary. This does not mean, however, that the author has ever proudly dreamed of reforming human vice. Heaven forbid he presume to do such a thing! He has simply found it entertaining to depict a man whom he considers typical of the present day, and whom he has often encountered in real life—far too often, unfortunately, both for himself and for you. It is enough that the disease has been pointed out; only God knows how it can be cured!

The End

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