

## Dostoevsky for Parents and Children: (VI) Nellie's Story

Scris de D.C.C.

Vineri, 18 Martie 2022 12:38

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Previously in the Dostoevsky for Parents and Children series:

[Varenka's Memoirs](#) (from the novel Poor Folk, 1846 [1883, 1887, 1897, DPC I])

[An Honest Thief](#) (from Stories of a Man of Experience, 1848 [suggested by the Introduction to the 1897 anthology, DPC V])

[At The Select Boarding School](#) (from the novel The Adolescent, 1875 [1883, 1897, DPC II])

[The Merchant's Story](#) (from the novel The Adolescent, 1875 [1897, DPC IV])

[The Peasant Marey](#) (from The Diary Of A Writer, January 1876 [1883, 1897, DPC III])

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{In square brackets we indicate the original Anna Grigorievna Dostoevskaya anthologies in which each story appeared, followed by its order of posting in the present Dostoevsky for Parents and Children (DPC) collection. Thus [1883, 1897, DPC II] means the story appeared in the first (1883) and third (1897), but not in the second (1887) Anna Dostoevskaya anthology, and was the second in this series of postings. Please find [here](#) our brief introduction to the original Dostoevsky for Children anthologies, and to this English online version.}

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"Nelly is the most poetic of the child images created by Dostoevsky, leaving behind the group of boys in *The Brothers Karamazov*." (V.V. Rozanov)

"[O]bjections were raised by one critic against the title [The Insulted and Injured] because it had led him to expect a genuine social novel. In fact, as he rightly points out, the characters behave in such a bizarre fashion that most of their difficulties are caused by their own blindness and folly; the intrigues of Prince Valkovsky [a darkly presaging embodiment of 'rational egoism' pushed to an extreme], on closer inspection, play only an accessory part in their dilemmas." (Joseph Frank)

Whether we can completely agree with Rozanov's assessment or not, the "inner" story of little Nelly is a deep mystery of tragedy and hope, hardly matched anywhere else in Dostoevsky's prose. Tragedy, because the child's most dearly loved ones (her prematurely lost mother, followed by her protector and essentially only friend) fail at critical times to steep her in the ways of selfless love. Hope, because at the few passing junctures when, for a moment, she is looked at, so to speak, "as if through the eyes of Peasant Marey", she responds well... (Dostoevsky seems able at times to look at all of his characters even as if through the eyes of St. Isaac the Syrian, to take one of his later hints, but do we "catch" his glances?)

In today's story, her friend and protector Vanya (Ivan Petrovich) asks the much tried orphan Nelly, then fourteen, to do something noble, but to her very painful, and even physically dangerous to her fragile constitution. Vanya asks Nelly to share with his lifelong friends, the Ikhmanevs (especially Nikolay Sergeych, the loving but naively idealistic, and therefore proud and unforgiving father of Natasha, his equally naive and Romantic "prodigal daughter") the similar but sad-ending story of her own grandfather and mother, so that the Ikhmenevs may not repeat all their mistakes. Indeed, at the cost of Nellie's doing so, the Ikhmenevs are blessed with a redeeming measure of self-knowledge, forgiveness, and self-forgiveness, something that Nellie's family has lacked (also see the novel's [last chapter](#) and [Epilogue](#) .)

Now, the sense of reconciliation and overflowing love all around her that ensued, would probably have healed Nellie's own ailments as well, had this been a Dickens story. It could, in any case, have healed her soul, as her friend and protector, Vanya, might have hoped, had he only inspired in her a selfless act of "outgoing love" (Frank.) Notice, in passing, that the age was not one of "stay home, keep safe" ethics. (Compare with the principles on which his Imperial Highness Alexei, heir to the Russian Throne was raised, according to his swiss tutor, [Pierre](#)

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when it came to it, his Imperial parents' "love itself gave them the strength to let him [a permanently endangered hemophiliac] run the risk of an accident which might prove fatal rather than see him grow up a man without strength of character or moral fibre.")

But Nellie's telling of her story also connotes a return to an inherited "egoism of suffering" (Dostoevsky): 'They are cruel and wicked, and this is what I bid you: remain poor, work, and ask for alms, and if anyone comes after you say "I won't go with you!" That's what mother said to me when she was ill, and I want to obey her all my life, ...and I'll work and be a servant all my life, and I've come to you, too, to work and be a servant. I don't want to be like a daughter.' Thereafter she remains a bed-ridden child, endearing to all, but who will nevertheless - in Vanya's words - die "unreconciled", during Easter week. Consumed by her inner plight, perhaps more than by outer disease. Why?

What was her inner plight? In the somewhat crude words of another character: 'from the very beginning [Nellie's Romantic mother] dreamed of something like a heaven upon earth, of angels; her love was boundless, her faith was limitless, and I'm convinced that she went mad afterwards, not because he [Valkovsky, Nellie's father] got tired of her and cast her off, but because she was deceived in him... Do you realize what an insult it was? In her horror and, above all, her pride, she drew back from him with infinite contempt. She broke all ties, tore up her papers, spat upon his money, forgetting that it was not her money, but her father's, refused it as so much dirt in order to crush her seducer by her spiritual grandeur, to look upon him having robbed her, and to have the right to despise him all her life. And [she] said to Nellie on her deathbed, "Don't go to him; work, perish, but don't go to him, whoever may try to take you." So that even then she was dreaming that she would be sought out, and so would be able once more to avenge herself by crushing the seeker with her contempt. In short, she fed on evil dreams instead of bread.'

Joseph Frank sums up: 'The proud and hence egoistic reaction of such frustrated Romantics leads to a masochistic intensification of their own misery and a certain sadism with regard to others... Among all the "insulted and injured," Nellie has the most right to claim such a designation; and she has acquired a savage pride and a mistrust of humanity initially encouraged by her mother's fierce intransigence.' Seen in this light, Nellie's "inner" story is, perhaps, a call for the same kind of repentant and redemptive tears, from the same kind of Dostoevskyan and spiritual perspective, as the "outer" mother-child tragedy unforgettably described and analyzed by I.M. Andreev [here](#) .

But, why does Nelly fall back on her mother's fierce intransigence, rather than grow in Vanya's ways of selflessness? At least in part, it was Vanya's own lapse: one of indelicacy to her youthful feelings. A half unselfconscious "first love" for him had developed in her fragile soul, a feeling that was one with all that he stood for in her eyes. And he had been cautioned. As he had been about her girlish, but painfully irrepressible, jealousy on Natasha, whom Vanya unconditionally loved, without being loved in return. It is for "her rival's" sake that he suddenly prompts Nellie to risk her life and go through the trial of telling her heart wrenching story to the Ikhmenevs. She does so, and achieves his purpose. But was not there a lack of gentlemanly sensitivity for her most delicate feelings, that "shatters her ideal", breaks her heart, and makes her fall back on her mother's egoism of suffering?

Now, Nellie's mother and Vanya (largely an embodiment of the author's younger Schillerian persona, and a literary presaging of both Prince Myshkin, "the Idiot", and of the Underground

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Man, depending on the angle we look from) have their own stories and circumstances. Last but not least, as Met. Anthony Khrapovitsky might note, Romantic and egotistic deceptions are but secular images and likenesses of a proud Western God, one of offense and satisfactory atonement, as opposed to the God of humility and co-suffering love. And while everyone, even early teens, have a measure of choice, God only knows how much and how they used it, in each case (cf. Abba Dorotheos on judgment, etc.)

We leave the last word on Nellie's soul to Dostoevsky. Alexandra Semyonovna is in some ways a "[Marey](#) and [Sofia Andreevna](#) -type" character:

'Nellie liked [Alexandra Semyonovna] very much. They took to each other like two sisters, and I fancy that in many things Alexandra Semyonovna was as much of a baby as Nellie. She used to tell the child stories and amuse her, and Nellie often missed her when she had gone home. Her first appearance surprised my invalid, but she quickly guessed why the uninvited visitor had come, and as usual frowned and became silent and ungracious.

"Why did she come to see us?" asked Nellie, with an air of displeasure after Alexandra Semyonovna had gone away.

"To help you Nellie, and to look after you."

"Why? What for? I've never done anything like that for her."

"Kind people don't wait for that, Nellie. They like to help people who need it, without that. That's enough, Nellie; there are lots of kind people in the world. It's only your misfortune that you haven't met them and didn't meet them when you needed them."

'Nellie did not speak. I walked away from her. But a quarter of an hour later she called me to her in a weak voice, asked for something to drink, and all at once warmly embraced me and for a long while would not let go of me. Next day, when Alexandra Semyonovna appeared, she welcomed her with a joyful smile, though she still seemed for some reason shamefaced with her.'

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F.M. Dostoevsky

Nellie's Story

(from The Insulted and Injured, 1861; Constance Garnett transl., 1914; Russian original [here](#) .)

Nellie was sitting in a corner, depressed and uneasy, and she looked at me strangely. I must have looked strange myself.

I took her hand, sat down on the sofa, took her on my knee, and kissed her warmly. She flushed.

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"Nellie, my angel!" I said to her, "would you like to be our salvation? Would you like to save us all?"

She looked at me in amazement.

"Nellie, you are my one hope now! There is a father, you've seen him and know him. He has cursed his daughter, and he came yesterday to ask you to take his daughter's place. Now she, Natasha (and you said you loved her), has been abandoned by the man she loved, for whose sake she left her father. He's the son of that prince who came, do you remember one evening, to see me, and found you alone, and you ran away from him and were ill afterwards ... you know him, don't you? He's a wicked man!"

"I know," said Nellie, trembling and turning pale.

"Yes, he's a wicked man. He hates Natasha because his son Alyosha wanted to marry her. Alyosha went away today, and an hour later his father went to Natasha and insulted her, and threatened to put her in a penitentiary, and laughed at her. Do you understand me, Nellie?"

Her black eyes flashed, but she dropped them at once.

"I understand," she whispered, hardly audibly.

"Now Natasha is alone, ill. I've left her with our doctor while I ran to you myself. Listen, Nellie, let us go to Natasha's father. You don't like him, you didn't want to go to him. But now let us go together. We'll go in and I'll tell them that you want to stay with them now and to take the place of their daughter Natasha. Her father is ill now, because he has cursed Natasha, and because Alyosha's father sent him a deadly insult the other day. He won't hear of his daughter now, but he loves her, he loves her, Nellie, and wants to make peace with her. I know that. I know all that! That is so. Do you hear, Nellie?"

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"I hear," she said in the same whisper.

I spoke to her with my tears flowing. She looked timidly at me.

"Do you believe it?"

"Yes."

"So I'll go in with you, I'll take you in and they'll receive you, make much of you and begin to question you. Then I'll turn the conversation so that they will question you about your past life; about your mother and your grandfather. Tell them, Nellie, everything, just as you told it to me. Tell them simply, and don't keep anything back. Tell them how your mother was abandoned by a wicked man, how she died in a cellar at Mme. Bubnov's, how your mother and you used to go about the streets begging, what she said, and what she asked you to do when she was dying... Tell them at the same time about your grandfather, how he wouldn't forgive your mother, and how she sent you to him just before her death how she died. Tell them everything, everything! And when you tell them all that, the old man will feel it all, in his heart, too. You see, he knows Alyosha has left her today and she is left insulted and injured, alone and helpless, with no one to protect her from the insults of her enemy. He knows all that . . . Nellie, save Natasha! Will you go?"

"Yes." she answered, drawing a painful breath, and she looked at me with a strange, prolonged gaze. There was something like reproach in that gaze, and I felt it in my heart.

But I could not give up my idea. I had too much faith in it.

I took Nellie by the arm and we went out. It was past two o'clock in the afternoon. A storm was coming on. For some time past the weather had been hot and stifling, but now we heard in the distance the first rumble of early spring thunder. The wind swept through the dusty streets.

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We got into a droshky. Nellie did not utter a word all the way, she only looked at me from time to time with the same strange and enigmatic eyes. Her bosom was heaving, and, holding her on the droshky, I felt against my hand the thumping of her little heart, which seemed as though it would leap out of her body.

The way seemed endless to me. At last we arrived and I went in to my old friends with a sinking at my heart. I did not know what my leave-taking would be like, but I knew that at all costs I must not leave their house without having won forgiveness and reconciliation.

It was by now past three. My old friends were, as usual, sitting alone. Nikolay Sergeych was unnerved and ill, and lay pale and exhausted, half reclining in his comfortable easy-chair, with his head tied up in a kerchief. Anna Andreyevna was sitting beside him, from time to time moistening his forehead with vinegar, and continually peeping into his face with a questioning and commiserating expression, which seemed to worry and even annoy the old man. He was obstinately silent, and she dared not be the first to speak. Our sudden arrival surprised them both. Anna Andreyevna, for some reason, took fright at once on seeing me with Nellie, and for the first minute looked at us as though she suddenly felt guilty.

"You see, I've brought you my Nellie," I said, going in.

She has made up her mind, and now she has come to you of her own accord. Receive her and love her. . . ."

The old man looked at me suspiciously, and from his eyes alone one could divine that he knew all, that is that Natasha was now alone, deserted, abandoned, and by now perhaps insulted. He was very anxious to learn the meaning of our arrival, and he looked inquiringly at both of us. Nellie was trembling, and tightly squeezing my hand in hers she kept her eyes on the ground and only from time to time stole frightened glances about her like a little wild creature in a snare. But Anna Andreyevna soon recovered herself and grasped the situation. She positively pounced on Nellie, kissed her, petted her, even cried over her, and tenderly made her sit beside



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her, keeping the child's hand in hers. Nellie looked at her askance with curiosity and a sort of wonder. But after fondling Nellie and making her sit beside her, the old lady did not know what to do next and began looking at me with naive expectation. The old man frowned, almost suspecting why I had brought Nellie. Seeing that I was noticing his fretful expression and frowning brows, he put his hand to his head and said:

"My head aches, Vanya."

All this time we sat without speaking. I was considering how to begin. It was twilight in the room, a black storm-cloud was coming over the sky, and there came again a rumble of thunder in the distance.

"We're getting thunder early this spring," said the old man. But I remember in '37 there were thunderstorms even earlier." Anna Andreyevna sighed.

"Shall we have the samovar?" she asked timidly, but no one answered, and she turned to Nellie again.

"What is your name, my darling?" she asked.

Nellie uttered her name in a faint voice, and her head drooped lower than ever. The old man looked at her intently.

"The same as Elena, isn't it?" Anna Andreyevna went on with more animation.

"Yes," answered Nellie.

And again a moment of silence followed.

"Praskovya Andreyevna's sister had a niece whose name was Elena; and she used to be called Nellie, too, I remember." observed Nikolay Sergeyitch.

"And have you no relations, my darling, neither father nor mother?" Anna Andreyevna asked again.

"No," Nellie jerked out in a timid whisper.

"I'd heard so, I'd heard so. Is it long since your mother died?"

"No, not long."

"Poor darling, poor little orphan," Anna Andreyevna went on, looking at her compassionately.

The old man was impatiently drumming on the table with his fingers.

"Your mother was a foreigner, wasn't she? You told me so, didn't you, Ivan Petrovitch?" the old lady persisted timidly.

Nellie stole a glance at me out of her black eyes, as though begging me to help her. She was breathing in hard, irregular gasps.

"Her mother was the daughter of an Englishman and a Russian woman; so she was more a Russian, Anna Andreyevna. Nellie was born abroad."

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"Why, did her mother go to live abroad when she was married?"

Nellie suddenly flushed crimson. My old friend guessed at once, that she had blundered, and trembled under a wrathful glance from her husband. He looked at her severely and turned away to the window.

"Her mother was deceived by a base, bad man," he brought out suddenly, addressing Anna Andreyevna. "She left her father on his account, and gave her father's money into her lover's keeping; and he got it from her by a trick, took her abroad, robbed and deserted her. A good friend remained true to her and helped her up to the time of his death. And when he died she came, two years ago, back to Russia, to her father. Wasn't that what you told us, Vanya?" he asked me abruptly.

Nellie got up in great agitation, and tried to move towards the door.

"Come here, Nellie," said the old man, holding out his hand to her at last. "Sit here, sit beside me, here, sit down."

He bent down, kissed her and began softly stroking her head.

Nellie was quivering all over, but she controlled herself. Anna Andreyevna with emotion and joyful hope saw how her Nikolay Sergeych was at last beginning to take to the orphan.

"I know, Nellie, that a wicked man, a wicked, unprincipled man ruined your mother, but I know, too, that she loved and honoured her father," the old man, still stroking Nellie's head, brought out with some excitement, unable to resist throwing down this challenge to us.

A faint flush suffused his pale cheeks, but he tried not to look at us.

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"Mother loved grandfather better than he loved her," Nellie asserted timidly but firmly. She, too, tried to avoid looking at anyone.

"How do you know?" the old man asked sharply, as impulsive as a child, though he seemed ashamed of his impatience.

"I know," Nellie answered jerkily. "He would not receive mother, and ... turned her away. . . ."

I saw that Nikolay Sergeyitch was on the point of saying something, making some reply such as that the father had good reason not to receive her, but he glanced at us and was silent.

"Why, where were you living when your grandfather wouldn't receive you?" asked Anna Andreyevna, who showed a sudden obstinacy and desire to continue the conversation on that subject.

"When we arrived we were a long while looking for grandfather," answered Nellie; "but we couldn't find him anyhow. Mother told me then that grandfather had once been very rich, and meant to build a factory, but that now he was very poor because the man that mother went away with had taken all grandfather's money from her and wouldn't give it back. She told me that herself."

"Hm!" responded the old man.

"And she told me, too," Nellie went on, growing more and more earnest, and seeming anxious to answer Nikolay Sergeyitch, though she addressed Anna Andreyevna, "she told me that grandfather was very angry with her, and that she had behaved very wrongly to him; and that she had no one in the whole world but grandfather. And when she told me this she cried. 'He will never forgive me,' she said when first we arrived, but perhaps he will see you and love you, and for your sake he will forgive me,' Mother was very fond of me, and she always used to kiss me when she said this, and she was very much afraid of going to grandfather. She taught me to pray for grandfather, she used to pray herself, and she told me a great deal of how she used to live in old days with grandfather, and how grandfather used to love her above everything. She

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used to play the piano to him and read to him in the evening, and grandfather used to kiss her and give her lots of presents. He used to give her everything; so that one day they had a quarrel on mother's name day, because grandfather thought mother didn't know what present he was going to give her, and mother had found out long before. Mother wanted earrings, and grandfather tried to deceive her and told her it was going to be a brooch, not earrings; and when he gave her the earrings and saw that mother knew that it was going to be earrings and not a brooch, he was angry that mother had found out and wouldn't speak to her for half the day, but afterwards he came of his own accord to kiss her and ask her forgiveness."

Nellie was carried away by her story, and there was a flush on her pale, wan little cheek. It was evident that more than once in their corner in the basement the mother had talked to her little Nellie of her happy days in the past, embracing and kissing the little girl who was all that was left to her in life, and weeping over her, never suspecting what a powerful effect these stories had on the frail child's morbidly sensitive and prematurely developed feelings.

But Nellie seemed suddenly to check herself. She looked mistrustfully around and was mute again. The old man frowned and drummed on the table again. A tear glistened in Anna Andreyevna's eye, and she silently wiped it away with her handkerchief.

"Mother came here very ill," Nellie went on in a low voice.

Her chest was very bad. We were looking for grandfather a long time and we couldn't find him; and we took a corner in an underground room."

"A corner, an invalid!" cried Anna Andreyevna.

"Yes ... a corner . . . answered Nellie. "Mother was poor. Mother told me," she added with growing earnestness, "that it's no sin to be poor, but it's a sin to be rich and insult people, and that God was punishing her."

"It was in Vassilyevsky Island you lodged? At Mme. Bubnov's, wasn't it?" the old man asked, turning to me, trying to throw a note of unconcern into his question. He spoke as though he felt

it awkward to remain sitting silent.

"No, not there. At first it was in Myestchansky Street," Nellie answered. "It was very dark and damp there," she added after a pause, "and mother got very ill there, though she was still walking about then. I used to wash the clothes for her, and she used to cry. There used to be an old woman living there, too, the widow of a captain; and there was a retired clerk, and he always came in drunk and made a noise every night. I was dreadfully afraid of him. Mother used to take me into her bed and hug me, and she trembled all over herself while he used to shout and swear. Once he tried to beat the captain's widow, and she was a very old lady and walked with a stick. Mother was sorry for her, and she stood up for her; the man hit mother, too, and I hit him. . ."

Nellie stopped. The memory agitated her; her eyes were blazing.

"Good heavens!" cried Anna Andreyevna, entirely absorbed in the story and keeping her eyes fastened upon Nellie, who addressed her principally.

"Then mother went away from there," Nellie went on, "and took me with her. That was in the daytime. We were walking about the streets till it was quite evening, and mother was walking about and crying all the time, and holding my hand. I was very tired. We had nothing to eat that day. And mother kept talking to herself and saying to me: 'Be poor, Nellie, and when I die don't listen to anyone or anything. Don't go to anyone, be alone and poor, and work, and if you can't get work beg alms, don't go to him.' It was dusk when we crossed a big street; suddenly mother cried out, 'Azorka! Azorka!' And a big dog, whose hair had all come off, ran up to mother, whining and jumping up to her. And mother was frightened; she turned pale, cried out, and fell on her knees before a tall old man, who walked with a stick, looking at the ground. And the tall old man was grandfather, and he was so thin and in such poor clothes. That was the first time I saw grandfather. Grandfather was very much frightened, too, and turned very pale, and when he saw mother kneeling before him and embracing his feet he tore himself away, pushed mother off, struck the pavement with his stick, and walked quickly away from us. Azorka stayed behind and kept whining and licking mother, and then ran after grandfather and took him by his coat-tail and tried to pull him back. And grandfather hit him with his stick. Azorka was going to run back to us, but grandfather called to him; he ran after grandfather and kept whining. And mother lay as though she were dead; a crowd came round and the police came. I kept calling out and trying to get mother up. She got up, looked round her, and followed me. I led her home. People looked at us a long while and kept shaking their heads."

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Nellie stopped to take breath and make a fresh effort. She was very pale, but there was a gleam of determination in her eyes. It was evident that she had made up her mind at last to tell all. There was something defiant about her at this moment.

"Well," observed Nikolay Sergeyitch in an unsteady voice, with a sort of irritable harshness. "Well, your mother had injured her father, and he had reason to repulse her."

"Mother told me that, too," Nellie retorted sharply; "and as she walked home she kept saying 'That's your grandfather, Nellie, and I sinned against him; and he cursed me, and that's why God has punished me.' And all that evening and all the next day she kept saying this. And she talked as though she didn't know what she was saying. . ."

The old man remained silent.

"And how was it you moved into another lodging? " asked Anna Andreyevna, still crying quietly.

"That night mother fell ill, and the captain's widow found her a lodging at Mme. Bubnov's, and two days later we moved, and the captain's widow with us; and after we'd moved mother was quite ill and in bed for three weeks, and I looked after her. All our money had gone, and we were helped by the captain's widow and Ivan Alexandritch."

"The coffin-maker, their landlord," I explained.

"And when mother got up and began to go about she told me all about Azorka."

Nellie paused. The old man seemed relieved to turn the conversation to the dog.

"What did she tell you about Azorka?" he asked, bending lower in his chair, so as to look down

and hide his face more completely.

"She kept talking to me about grandfather," answered Nellie; and when she was ill she kept talking about him, and as soon as she began to get better she used to tell me how she used to live... Then she told me about Azorka, because some horrid boys tried once to drown Azorka in the river outside the town, and mother gave them some money and bought Azorka. And when grandfather saw Azorka he laughed very much. Only Azorka ran away. Mother cried; grandfather was frightened and promised a hundred roubles to anyone who would bring back Azorka. Two days after, Azorka was brought back. Grandfather gave a hundred roubles for him, and from that time he got fond of Azorka. And mother was so fond of him that she used even to take him to bed with her. She told me that Azorka had been used to performing in the street with some actors, and knew how to do his part, and used to have a monkey riding on his back, and knew how to use a gun and lots of other things. And when mother left him, grandfather kept Azorka with him and always went out with him, so that as soon as mother saw Azorka in the street she guessed at once that grandfather was close by."

The old man had evidently not expected this about Azorka, and he scowled more and more. He asked no more questions.

"So you didn't see your grandfather again?" asked Anna Andreyevna.

"Yes, when mother had begun to get better I met grandfather again. I was going to the shop to get some bread. Suddenly I saw a man with Azorka; I looked closer and saw it was grandfather. I stepped aside and squeezed up against the wall, Grandfather looked at me; he looked so hard at me and was so terrible that I was awfully afraid of him, and walked by. Azorka remembered me, and began to jump about me and lick my hands. I went home quickly, looked back, and grandfather went into the shop. Then I thought, 'he's sure to make inquiries,' and I was more frightened than ever, and when I went home I said nothing to mother for fear she should be ill again. I didn't go to the shop next day; I said I had a headache; and when I went the day after I, met no one; I was terribly frightened so that I ran fast. But a day later I went, and I'd hardly got round the corner when grandfather stood before me with Azorka. I ran and turned into another street and went to the shop a different way; but I suddenly came across him again, and was so frightened that I stood quite still and couldn't move. Grandfather stood before me and looked at me a long time and afterwards stroked my head, took me by the hand and led me along, while Azorka followed behind wagging his tail. Then I saw that grandfather couldn't walk properly, but kept leaning on his stick, and his hands were trembling all the time. He took me to a stall at the corner of the street where gingerbread and apples were sold. Grandfather bought a gingerbread cock and a fish, and a sweetmeat, and an apple; and when he took the money out of his leather



purse, his hands shook dreadfully and he dropped a penny, and I picked it up. He gave me that penny and gave me the gingerbread, and stroked me on the head; but still he said nothing, but walked away.

"Then I went to mother and told her all about grandfather, and how frightened I had been of him at first and had hidden from him. At first mother didn't believe me, but afterwards she was so delighted that she asked me questions all the evening, kissed me and cried; and when I had told her all about it she told me for the future not to be afraid of him, and that grandfather must love me since he came up to me on purpose. And she told me to be nice to grandfather and to talk to him. And next day she sent me out several times in the morning, though I told her that grandfather never went out except in the evening. She followed me at a distance, hiding behind a corner. Next day she did the same, but grandfather didn't come, and it rained those days, and mother caught a bad cold coming down to the gate with me, and had to go to bed again.

"Grandfather came a week later, and again bought me a gingerbread, fish and an apple, and said nothing that time either. And when he walked away I followed him quietly, because I had made up my mind beforehand that I'd find out where grandfather lived and tell mother. I walked a long way behind on the other side of the street so that grandfather didn't see me. And he lived very far away, not where he lived afterwards and died, but in another big house in Gorohovoy Street, on the fourth storey. I found out all that, and it was late when I got home. Mother was horribly frightened, for she didn't know where I was. When I told her she was delighted again and wanted to go to see grandfather next day, The next day she began to think and be afraid, and went on being afraid for three whole days, so she didn't go at all. And then she called me and said, 'Listen, Nellie, I'm ill now and can't go, but I've written a letter to your grandfather, go to him and give him the letter. And see, Nellie, how he reads it, and what he says, and what he'll do; and you kneel down and kiss him and beg him to forgive your mother.' And mother cried dreadfully and kept kissing me, and making the sign of the cross and praying, and she made me kneel down with her before the ikon, and though she was very ill she went with me as far as the gate; and when I looked round she was still standing watching me go...

"I went to grandfather's and opened the door; the door had no latch. Grandfather was sitting at the table eating bread and potatoes; and Azorka stood watching him eat and wagging his tail. In that lodging, too, the windows were low and dark, and there, too, there was only one table and one chair. And he lived alone. I went in, and he was so frightened that he turned white and began to tremble. I was frightened, too, and didn't say a word. I only went up to the table and put down the letter. When grandfather saw the letter he was so angry that he jumped up, lifted his stick and shook it at me; but he didn't hit me, he only led me into the passage and pushed me. Before I had got down the first flight of stairs he opened the door again and threw the letter after me without opening it. I went home and told mother all about it. Then mother was ill in bed again..."

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At that moment there was a rather loud peal of thunder, and heavy raindrops pattered on the window panes. The room grew dark. Anna Andreyevna seemed alarmed and crossed herself. We were all startled.

"It will soon be over," said the old man, looking towards the window. Then he got up and began walking up and down the room.

Nellie looked askance at him. She was in a state of extreme abnormal excitement. I saw that, though she seemed to avoid looking at me.

"Well, what next?" asked the old man, sitting down in his easy-chair again.

Nellie looked round timidly.

"So you didn't see your grandfather again?"

"Yes, I did..."

"Yes, yes! Tell us, darling, tell us," Anna Andreyevna put in hastily.

"I didn't see him for three weeks," said Nellie, "not till it was quite winter. It was winter then and the snow had fallen. When I met grandfather again at the same place I was awfully pleased . . . for mother was grieving that he didn't come. When I saw him I ran to the other side of the street

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on purpose that he might see I ran away from him. Only I looked round and saw that grandfather was following me quickly, and then ran to overtake me, and began calling out to me, 'Nellie, Nellie!' And Azorka was running after me. I felt sorry for him and I stopped. Grandfather came up, took me by the hand and led me along, and when he saw I was crying, he stood still, looked at me, bent down and kissed me. Then he saw that my shoes were old, and he asked me if I had no others. I told him as quickly as I could that mother had no money, and that the people at our lodging only gave us something to eat out of pity. Grandfather said nothing, but he took me to the market and bought me some shoes and told me to put them on at once, and then he took me home with him, and went first into a shop and bought a pie and two sweetmeats, and when we arrived he told me to eat the pie; and he looked at me while I ate it, and then gave me the sweetmeats. And Azorka put his paws on the table and asked for some pie, too; I gave him some, and grandfather laughed. Then he took me, made me stand beside him, began stroking my head, and asked me whether I had learnt anything and what I knew. I answered him, and he told me whenever I could to come at three o'clock in the afternoon, and that he would teach me himself. Then he told me to turn away and look out of the window till he told me to look round again. I did as he said, but I peeped round on the sly, and I saw him unpick the bottom corner of his pillow and take out four roubles. Then he brought them to me and said, 'That's only for you.' I was going to take them, but then I changed my mind and said, 'If it's only for me I won't take them.' Grandfather was suddenly angry, and said to me, 'Well do as you please, go away.' I went away, and he didn't kiss me.

"When I got home I told mother everything. And mother kept getting worse and worse. A medical student used to come and see the coffin-maker; he saw mother and told her to take medicine.

"I used to go and see grandfather often. Mother told me to. Grandfather bought a New Testament and a geography book, and began to teach me; and sometimes he used to tell me what countries there are, and what sort of people live in them, and all the seas, and how it used to be in old times, and how Christ forgave us all. When I asked him questions he was very much pleased, and so I often asked him questions, and he kept telling me things, and he talked a lot about God. And, sometimes we didn't have lessons, but played with Azorka. Azorka began to get fond of me and I taught him to jump over a stick, and grandfather used to laugh and pat me on the head. Only grandfather did not often laugh. One time he would talk a great deal, and then he would suddenly be quiet and seem to fall asleep, though his eyes were open. And so he would sit till it was dark, and when it was dark he would become so dreadful, so old.... Another time I'd come and find him sitting in his chair thinking, and he'd hear nothing; and Azorka would be lying near him. I would wait and wait and cough; and still grandfather wouldn't look round. And so I'd go away. And at home mother would be waiting for me. She would be there, and I would tell her everything, everything, so that night would come on--while I'd still be telling her and she'd still be listening about grandfather; what he'd done that day, and what he'd said to me, the stories he had told and the lessons he'd given me. And when I told her how I'd made Azorka jump over a stick and how grandfather had laughed, she suddenly laughed, too, and she

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would laugh and be glad for a long time and make me repeat it again and then begin to pray. And I was always thinking that mother loved grandfather so much and grandfather didn't love her at all, and when I went to grandfather's I told him on purpose how much mother loved him and was always asking about him. He listened, looking so angry, but still he listened and didn't say a word. Then I asked him why it was that mother loved him so much that she was always asking about him, while he never asked about mother. Grandfather got angry and turned me out of the room. I stood outside the door for a little while; and he suddenly opened the door and called me in again; and still he was angry and silent. And afterwards when we began reading the Gospel I asked him again why Jesus Christ said 'Love one another and forgive injuries' and yet he wouldn't forgive mother. Then he jumped up and said that mother had told me that, put me out again and told me never to dare come and see him again. And I said that I wouldn't come and see him again anyhow, and went away. . . . And next day grandfather moved from his lodgings."

"I said the rain would soon be over; see it is over, the sun's come out . . . look, Vanya," said Nikolay Sergeyitch, turning to the window.

Anna Andreyevna turned to him with extreme surprise, and suddenly there was a flash of indignation in the eyes of the old lady, who had till then been so meek and over-awed. Silently she took Nellie's hand and made her sit on her knee.

"Tell me, my angel" she said, "I will listen to you. Let the hardhearted . . ."

She burst into tears without finishing. Nellie looked questioningly at me, as though in hesitation and dismay. The old man looked at me, seemed about to shrug his shoulders, but at once turned away.

"Go on, Nellie," I said.

"For three days I didn't go to grandfather," Nellie began again; "and at that time mother got worse. All our money was gone and we had nothing to buy medicine with, and nothing to eat, for the coffin-maker and his wife had nothing either, and they began to scold us for living at their expense. Then on the third day I got up and dressed. Mother asked where I was going. I said to grandfather to ask for money, and she was glad, for I had told mother already about how he had

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turned me out, and had told her that I didn't want to go to him again, though she cried and tried to persuade me to go. I went and found out that grandfather had moved, so I went to look for him in the new house. As soon as I went in to see him in his new lodging he jumped up, rushed at me and stamped; and I told him at once that mother was very ill, that we couldn't get medicine without money, fifty kopecks, and that we'd nothing to eat . . . Grandfather shouted and drove me out on to the stairs and latched the door behind me. But when he turned me out I told him I should sit on the stairs and not go away until he gave me the money. And I sat down on the stairs. In a little while he opened the door, and seeing I was sitting there he shut it again. Then, after a long time he opened it again, saw me, and shut it again. And after that he opened it several times and looked out. Afterwards he came out with Azorka, shut the door and passed by me without saying a word. And I didn't say a word, but went on sitting there and sat there till it got dark."

"My darling!" cried Anna Andreyevna, "but it must have been so cold on the staircase!"

"I had on a warm coat," Nellie answered.

"A coat, indeed! . . . Poor darling, what miseries you've been through! What did he do then, your grandfather?"

Nellie's lips began to quiver, but she made an extraordinary effort and controlled herself.

"He came back when it was quite dark and stumbled against me as he came up, and cried out, 'Who is it?' I said it was I. He must have thought I'd gone away long ago, and when he saw I was still there he was very much surprised, and for a long while he stood still before me. Suddenly he hit the steps with his stick, ran and opened his door, and a minute later brought me out some coppers and threw them to me on the stairs.

"'Here, take this!' he cried. 'That's all I have, take it and tell your mother that I curse her.' And then he slammed the door. The money rolled down the stairs. I began picking it up in the dark. And grandfather seemed to understand that he'd thrown the money about on the stairs, and that it was difficult for me to find it in the dark; he opened the door and brought out a candle, and by candlelight I soon picked it up. And grandfather picked some up, too, and told me that it was seventy kopecks altogether, and then he went away. When I got home I gave mother the money

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and told her everything; and mother was worse, and I was ill all night myself, and next day, too, I was all in a fever. I was angry with grandfather. I could think of nothing else; and when mother was asleep I went out to go to his lodging, and before I got there I stopped on the bridge, and then he passed by. . ."

"Arhipov," I said. "The man I told you about, Nikolay Sergeyitch--the man who was with the young merchant at Mme. Bubnov's and who got a beating there. Nellie saw him then for the first time ... Go on, Nellie."

"I stopped him and asked him for some money, a silver rouble. He said, 'A silver rouble?' I said, 'Yes.' Then he laughed and said, 'Come with me.' I didn't know whether to go. An old man in gold spectacles came up and heard me ask for the silver rouble. He stooped down and asked me why I wanted so much. I told him that mother was ill and that I wanted as much for medicine. He asked where we lived and wrote down the address, and gave me a rouble note. And when the other man saw the gentleman in spectacles he walked away and didn't ask me to come with him any more. I went into a shop and changed the rouble. Thirty kopecks I wrapped up in paper and put apart for mother, and seventy kopecks I didn't put in paper, but held it in my hand on purpose and went to grandfather's. When I got there I opened the door, stood in the doorway, and threw all the money into the room, so that it rolled about the floor.

"'There, take your money' I said to him. 'Mother doesn't want it since you curse her.' Then I slammed the door and ran away at once."

Her eyes flashed, and she looked with naive defiance at the old man.

"Quite right, too," said Anna Andreyevna, not looking at Nikolay Sergeyitch and pressing Nellie in her arms. "It served him right. Your grandfather was wicked and cruel hearted. . ."

"H'm!" responded Nikolay Sergeyitch.

"Well, what then, what then?" Anna Andreyevna asked impatiently.

"I left off going to see grandfather and he left off coming to meet me," said Nellie.

"Well, how did you get on then--your mother and you? Ah, poor things, poor things!"

"And mother got worse still, and she hardly ever got up," Nellie went on, and her voice quivered and broke. "We had no more money, and I began to go out with the captain's widow. She used to go from house to house, and stop good people in the street, too, begging; that was how she lived. She used to tell me she wasn't a beggar, that she had papers to show her rank, and to show that she was poor, too. She used to show these papers, and people used to give her money for that. She used to tell me that there was no disgrace in begging from all. I used to go out with her, and people gave us money, and that's how we lived. Mother found out about it because the other lodgers blamed her for being a beggar, and Mme. Bubnov herself came to mother and said she'd better let me go for her instead of begging in the street. She'd been to see mother before and brought her money, and when mother wouldn't take it from her she said why was she so proud, and sent her things to eat. And when she said this about me mother was frightened and began to cry; and Mme. Bubnov began to swear at her, for she was drunk, and told her that I was a beggar anyway and used to go out with the captain's widow,' and that evening she turned the captain's widow out of the house. When mother heard about it she began to cry; then she suddenly got out of bed, dressed, took my hand and led me out with her. Ivan Alexandritch tried to stop her, but she wouldn't listen to him, and we went out. Mother could scarcely walk, and had to sit down every minute or two in the street, and I supported her. Mother kept saying that she would go to grandfather and that I was to take her there, and by then it was quite night. Suddenly we came into a big street; there a lot of carriages were waiting outside one of the houses, and a great many people were coming out; there were lights in all the windows and one could hear music. Mother stopped, clutched me and said to me then, 'Nellie, be poor, be poor all your life; don't go to him, whoever calls you, whoever comes to you. You might be there, rich and finely dressed, but I don't want that. They are cruel and wicked, and this is what I bid you: remain poor, work, and ask for alms, and if anyone comes after you say 'I won't go with you!' That's what mother said to me when she was ill, and I want to obey her all my life," Nellie added, quivering with emotion, her little face glowing; "and I'll work and be a servant all my life, and I've come to you, too, to work and be a servant. I don't want to be like a daughter. . ."

"Hush, hush, my darling, hush!" cried Anna Andreyevna, clasping Nellie warmly. "Your mother was ill, you know, when she said that."

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"She was out of her mind," said the old man sharply.

"What if she were!" cried Nellie, turning quickly to him.

"If she were out of her mind she told me so, and I shall do it all my life. And when she said that to me she fell down fainting."

"Merciful heavens!" cried Anna Andreyevna. "Ill, in the street, in winter!"

"They would have taken us to the police, but a gentleman took our part, asked me our address, gave me ten roubles, and told them to drive mother to our lodging in his carriage, Mother never got up again after that, and three weeks afterwards she died ..."

"And her father? He didn't forgive her after all, then?" cried Anna Andreyevna.

"He didn't forgive her," answered Nellie, mastering herself with a painful effort. "A week before her death mother called me to her and said, 'Nellie, go once more to your grandfather, the last time, and ask him to come to me and forgive me. Tell him in a few days I shall be dead, leaving you all alone in the world. And tell him, too, that it's hard for me to die. . . .' I went and knocked at grandfather's door. He opened it, and as soon as he saw me he meant to shut it again, but I seized the door with both hands and cried out to him:

"'Mother's dying, she's asking for you; come along.' But he pushed me away and slammed the door. I went back to mother, lay down beside her, hugged her in my arms and said nothing. Mother hugged me, too, and asked no questions."

At this point Nikolay Sergeyitch leant his hands heavily on the table and stood up, but after looking at us all with strange, lustreless eyes, sank back into his easy-chair helplessly. Anna Andreyevna no longer looked at him. She was, sobbing over Nellie...



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"The last day before mother died, towards evening she called me to her, took me by the hand and said:

"I shall die today, Nellie."

"She tried to say something more, but she couldn't. I looked at her, but she seemed not to see me, only she held my hand tight in hers. I softly pulled away my hand and ran out of the house, and ran all the way to grandfather's. When he saw me he jumped up from his chair and looked at me, and was so frightened that he turned quite pale and trembled. I seized his hand and only said:

"She's just dying.'

"Then all of a sudden in a flurry he picked up his stick and ran after me; he even forgot his hat, and it was cold. I picked up his hat and put it on him, and we ran off together. I hurried him and told him to take a sledge because mother was just dying, but grandfather only had seven kopecks, that was all he had. He stopped a cab and began to bargain, but they only laughed at him and laughed at Azorka; Azorka was running with us, and we all ran on and on. Grandfather was tired and breathing hard, but he still hurried on, running. Suddenly he fell down, and his hat fell off. I helped him up and put his hat on, and led him by the hand, and only towards night we got home. But mother was already lying dead. When grandfather saw her he flung up his hands, trembled, and stood over her, but said nothing. Then I went up to my dead mother, seized grandfather's hand and cried out to him:

"See, you wicked, cruel man. Look! ... Look! "Then grandfather screamed and fell down as though he were dead ..."

Nellie jumped up, freed herself from Anna Andreyevna's arms, and stood in the midst of us, pale, exhausted, and terrified. But Anna Andreyevna flew to her, and embracing her again cried as though she were inspired.

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"I'll be a mother to you now, Nellie, and you shall be my child. Yes, Nellie, let us go, let us give up these cruel, wicked people.. Let them mock at people; God will requite them. Come, Nellie, come away from here, come!"

I have never, before or since, seen her so agitated, and I had never thought she could be so excited. Nikolay Sergeych sat up in his chair, stood up, and in a breaking voice asked:

"Where are you going, Anna Andreyevna?"

"To her, to my daughter, to Natasha!" she exclaimed, drawing Nellie after her to the door.

"Stay, stay! Wait!"

"No need to wait, you cruel, cold-hearted man! I have waited too long, and she has waited, but now, good-bye! ..."

Saying this, Anna Andreyevna turned away, glanced at her husband, and stopped, petrified. Nikolay Sergeych was reaching for his hat, and with feeble, trembling hands was pulling on his coat.

"You, too! ... You coming with us, too!" she cried, clasping her hands in supplication, looking at him incredulously as though she dared not believe in such happiness.

"Natasha! Where is my Natasha? Where is she? Where's my daughter?" broke at last from the old man's lips. "Give me back my Natasha! Where, where is she?"

And seizing his stick, which I handed him, he rushed to the door.

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"He has forgiven! Forgiven!" cried Anna Andreyevna.