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Mikhail Bakunin

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November 1848

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We soon made ourselves acquainted. A charming intimacy was established between us.... They spoke to me of their pastimes, of their pleasures, of their love for their father... of his goodness, of the tender solicitude that he had for them. I admired the guilelessness, the touching simplicity of these charming creatures, raised in solitude and free as the nature that had served as their mother... I admired their careful, delicate education, their nobles manners,... their cultivated minds, the young women united all the primitive grace of a rural education with the distinction and tact of the life of the salons...

Recovered from the first confusion that my presence had caused them, they became merry, playful, they no longer feared me and freely indulged all the charming caprices, all the impulses of their hearts... Désirée was, as her father had told me, the most serious... She only laughed with the tips of her lips, and silently... Alice was the wildest, she blushed all the time, and spoke little,.. but she could not help bursting out in laughter and the of her sister Anna, the maddest of them all, and the most mischievous. – I felt a singular pleasure contemplating the enchanting face of the blonde, voluptuous creature, the pure brow that was veiled at times as by a light

cloud of delight, the big, damp eyes sparkling with pleasure, these pink cheeks with their provocative dimples, that impish little nose, and those lips, so soft and so sparkling with youth, which half-opened in laughter, showing me a delightful row of sharp, damp little pearls.....

Désirée already inspired in me a deep, burning passion that was close to adoration... Anna some mad, delirious desires... What I felt for Alice could be compared to the need one feels to refresh their senses with the perfume of a flower... I wanted to become intoxicated and taste the paradise in the arms of Désirée... to die from delight in those of Anna.... and to slake my thirst by breathing the kisses and the breath of Alice, extinguishing my ardor on her virginal bosom...

They asked me a thousand questions about my homeland, about my family, about different circumstances of my life... Their father had already recounted to them how I had saved his life, but they absolutely expected that I should tell them the tale... They listened to me with a visible tenderness, attentive, fluttering, hanging, so to speak, on my words, and when I had finished, I felt that I had won their hearts... It was a true pleasure for me to see the emotion painted on their faces, taking on each an individual character.

Désirée regarded me with a passionate gratitude; her big blue eyes cast me, from beneath her long lashes, a profound gaze, quivering with tenderness... In the eyes of Anna I read an exuberant promise of delight, – and in those of Alice a sentiment of adoration and respect...

“You have saved the life of my father... We owe you so much...” said Désirée with a voice soft and muffled...

“Oh, we love you so,” cried Anna...

Alice did not say a word; but she grasped my hand and deposited a kiss there... That ethereal caress, the imprint of those cool, smooth lips, gave rise to voluptuous emotions in me...

“We all want to kiss the hand that saved our father...”

“No... not like that, my sweet friends... Come into my arms.

They all three threw themselves into my arms, stirred, quivering; I encircled them in single embrace and I pressed my mouth against their beautiful blushing foreheads... That delicate contact, that soft and voluptuous embrace, the intoxicating scents exhaled by their hair, mixed with the perfume of their sweet-scented breath, these young quivering bodies, their bosoms heaving, their beautiful eyes moist with tenderness... All that united in a single sensation, and plunged me into an intoxication that defies description. –

After a short moment of silence, we began to walk again... The three angels were all still stirred; their breasts rose and fell quickly, their ashamed glances did not dare settle on me... Finally, interrupting the silence, Désirée said:

“Perhaps if we took our friend to see the lodging that we have prepared for him...”

It was a little kiosk in the middle of the garden. The first chamber was a fine salon arranged with exquisite taste, with large windows packed with fragrant flowers, a piano, a large sofa of red velvet covered with magnificent cushions... In one corner the statue of the modest Venus, and in another above the sofa, a Cupid holding in one hand a rich torch in bronze with ten candles, pressing one finger to its mouth as if to invite discretion. – The other chamber was a study with a carefully chosen library... We stopped before a large door covered by a hanging of red damask...

“We should stop here,” said Désirée, “You should enter all alone... My father has forbidden us to pass the threshold of that chamber before you have led us there yourself... He has prepared some surprise for us there.” – The chamber was a large bedroom with a large bed ornamented with a magnificent covering... A Persian rug, a large trumeau, a soft sofa... and above the sofa a large painting representing Cupid and Psyche in a voluptuous pose... – Then another large chamber with three beds and above each a likeness perfectly rendered and representative: one Désirée, the other Anna, and the other Alice in

their natural grandeur... Nothing so fresh, so delicious as that mysterious apartment, – then another chamber with a single bed that was obvious reserved for me,... then some magnificent baths with all sorts [...] des cabinets de toilette for each of the young women, one for me, another study for my friends,... in short, the old man had foreseen and prepared everything...

On the table I found a letter addressed to Désirée.

When I returned, the youngsters asked me if I could show them that mysterious chamber...

“Not yet,” I told them, smiling... They were very disappointed...

“You are unkind,” said Anna...

I could not prevent myself from casting a fervent gaze at these three beautiful and innocent creatures who showed so much impatience to enter the sanctuary where I should sacrifice them on the altar of delight...

“I cannot yet, – but in order to console you, here is a letter for Désirée...”

“Ah!... it is my father’s handwriting,” she cried, seizing it. –

They set about reading it, all three together. – I tried to divine the contents by the expressions on their young faces [the manuscript breaks off here]