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*Selected and Edited by*

CATHY POPKIN  
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overhanging the water; only the song of the stout-hearted nightingale was missing, and the scent of poplars and young grass.

When he reached the garden, Ryabovich looked in at the gate. In the garden it was dark and still. He could see only the white trunks of the nearest birch trees and a small patch of the avenue, all the rest merged into a black mass. He peered into the garden, listening intently; but after standing there a quarter of an hour without hearing a sound or seeing so much as a light, he slowly walked back.

As he drew near the river, the general's bathhouse, with white bath sheets hanging on the rails of the little bridge, rose before him. He ascended the bridge, stood there a moment, and without knowing why, touched one of the bath sheets. It felt rough and cold. He looked down at the water. The river was flowing rapidly, purling almost inaudibly around the piles of the bathhouse. The red moon was reflected in the water near the left bank; little ripples ran across the reflection, expanding it, then breaking it into bits, as though wishing to carry it off. . . .

"How foolish! How foolish!" he thought, gazing at the flowing water. "How stupid it all is!"

Now that he expected nothing, the incident of the kiss, his impatience, his vague hopes and disappointment, presented themselves to him in a clear light. It no longer seemed strange that he had waited in vain for the general's messenger, or that he would never see the one who had accidentally kissed him instead of someone else; on the contrary, it would have been strange if he had seen her. . . .

The river ran on, no one knew where or why, just as it had in May; from a small stream it flowed into a large river, from the river to the sea, then rose in vapor and returned in rain; and perhaps the very same water he had seen in May was again flowing before his eyes. . . . For what purpose? Why?

And the whole world, all of life, seemed to Ryabovich to be an incomprehensible, aimless jest. . . . Raising his eyes from the water and gazing at the sky, he again recalled how fate in the guise of an unknown woman had by chance caressed him; and remembering his summer dreams and fantasies, his life now seemed singularly meager, wretched, and drab.

When he returned to the hut he found not one of his comrades. The orderly informed him that they had all gone "to General Fontriabkin's, who sent a messenger on horseback to invite them." . . . For an instant joy flamed in his breast, but he immediately stifled it and went to bed, and in his wrath with his fate, as though wishing to spite it, did not go to the general's.

## Kashtanka†

### Chapter One

#### MISBEHAVIOR

A young, rusty-red dog, half-dachshund and half-mutt, very much resembling a fox, was running up and down the sidewalk, looking anxiously in all directions. Every once in a while she stopped and whined, shifting from one frozen paw to the other, trying to figure out how she could have gotten lost.

She remembered perfectly well how she had spent the day and how she had finally wound up on this unfamiliar sidewalk.

The day had begun when her master, the cabinetmaker Luka Alexandrych, put on his hat, took some wooden thing wrapped in a red handkerchief under his arm, and hollered:

"Kashtanka, let's go!"

Hearing her name, the half-dachshund half-mutt came out from under the workbench where she slept on the wood shavings, stretched sweetly, and ran after her master.

Luka Alexandrych's customers lived terribly far apart, so on his way from one to the other he had to stop several times at a tavern to fortify himself. Kashtanka remembered that on the way she had behaved very improperly. She was so overjoyed to be going for a walk that she jumped about, barked at trolley cars, dashed into backyards, and chased other dogs. The cabinetmaker kept losing sight of her and would stop and shout angrily at her. Once, with an avid expression on his face, he even grabbed her foxlike ear in his fist, pulled it, and said slowly and firmly, "Drop . . . dead . . . you . . . pest!"

Having seen his customers, Luka Alexandrych stopped at his sister's, where he had a bite to eat and a few more drinks. From his sister's, he went to see a bookbinder he knew; from the bookbinder's to a tavern; from the tavern to a friend's house, and so on. In short, by the time Kashtanka found herself on the unfamiliar sidewalk, it was getting dark and the cabinetmaker was as drunk as a fish. He waved his arms and, sighing deeply, moaned:

"In sin did my mother conceive me in my womb! Oh, my sins, my sins! So now we're going down the street and looking at the street-lights, but when we die, we'll burn in the fiery hyena . . ."<sup>1</sup>

† Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky for this Norton Critical Edition.

1. "In sin did my mother conceive me" is line 5 of Psalm 51. To this, Luka absurdly adds a bit of line 10, "in my womb." The King James version of this phrase is "within me," but the Slavonic has "in my innards" or "womb" or "secret parts." "In my womb" has been chosen for its absurdity. [*Translators' note.*] The "hyena" (*giena*) Luka invokes at the

Or else he fell into a good-natured tone, called Kashtanka to him, and said:

"You, Kashtanka, are an insect creature and nothing more. Compared to a man, you're like a carpenter compared to a cabinetmaker . . ."

While he was talking to her in that fashion, suddenly there had come a burst of music. Kashtanka looked around and saw a regiment of soldiers marching down the street straight at her. She couldn't stand music, which upset her nerves, and she rushed around and howled. But to her great surprise, the cabinetmaker, instead of being frightened, yelping and barking, grinned broadly, stood at attention, and gave a salute. Seeing that her master did not protest, Kashtanka howled even louder, then lost her head and rushed to the other side of the street.

When she came to her senses, the music had already stopped and the regiment was gone. She rushed back across the street to where she had left her master, but alas, the cabinetmaker was also gone. She rushed ahead, then back, ran across the street once more, but it was as if the cabinetmaker had vanished into thin air . . . Kashtanka began sniffing the sidewalk, hoping to find her master by the smell of his tracks, but some scoundrel had just walked past in new galoshes, and now all the delicate scents were mixed with the strong stench of rubber, so that it was impossible to tell one from the other.

Kashtanka ran back and forth but could not find her master, and meanwhile night was falling. The lamps were lighted on both sides of the street, and lights appeared in the windows. Big, fluffy snowflakes were falling, painting the sidewalks, the horses' backs, and the coachmen's hats white, and the darker it grew, the whiter everything became. Unknown customers ceaselessly walked back and forth past Kashtanka, obstructing her field of vision and shoving her with their feet. (Kashtanka divided the whole of mankind into two very unequal parts: the masters and the customers; there was an essential difference between them: the first had the right to beat her, the second she herself had the right to nip on the calves.) The customers were hurrying somewhere and did not pay the slightest attention to her.

When it was quite dark, Kashtanka was overcome by fear and despair. She huddled in some doorway and began to weep bitterly. She was tired from her long day's travels with Luka Alexandrych, her ears and paws were frozen, and besides she was terribly hungry.

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end is his deformation of "Gehenna" (*geena*), originally a Jewish term for something resembling Hell; in the New Testament, too, it refers to a place of torment for the wicked after death.

Only twice in the whole day had she had anything to eat: at the bookbinder's she had lapped up some paste, and in one of the taverns she had found a sausage skin near the counter—that was all. If she had been a human being, she would probably have thought:

"No, it's impossible to live this way! I'll shoot myself!"

### Chapter Two

#### A MYSTERIOUS STRANGER

But she did not think about anything and only wept. When soft, fluffy snow had completely covered Kashtanka's back and head, and she had sunk into a deep slumber from exhaustion, suddenly the door clicked, creaked, and hit her on the side. She jumped up. A man came out, belonging to the category of customers. As Kashtanka squealed and got under his feet, he could not help noticing her. He leaned down and asked:

"Where did you come from, pooch? Did I hurt you? Oh, poor thing, poor thing . . . Well, don't be angry, don't be angry . . . It was my fault."

Kashtanka looked up at the stranger through the snowflakes that stuck to her eyelashes and saw before her a short, fat little man with a plump, clean-shaven face, wearing a top hat and an unbuttoned fur coat.

"Why are you whining?" the man went on, brushing the snow from her back with his finger. "Where is your master? You must be lost. Oh, poor little pooch! What shall we do now?"

Catching a warm, friendly note in the stranger's voice, Kashtanka licked his hand and whined even more pitifully.

"Well, aren't you a cute one!" said the stranger. "A real fox! I guess I don't have much choice, do I? Come on, then, maybe I'll find some use for you . . . Well, phweet!"

He whistled and made a gesture with his hand which could only signify one thing: "Let's go!" Kashtanka went.

In less than half an hour she was sitting on the floor of a large, bright room, with her head cocked, looking tenderly and curiously at the stranger, who was sitting at the table eating supper. He ate and tossed her some scraps . . . At first he gave her bread and the green rind of cheese, then a small piece of meat, half of a dumpling, some chicken bones, and she was so hungry that she gobbled them down without tasting anything. And the more she ate, the hungrier she felt.

"Your master doesn't feed you very well," said the stranger, seeing with what fierce greed she swallowed the unchewed pieces. "And what a scrawny one! Skin and bones . . ."

Kashtanka ate a lot, yet she didn't feel full, only groggy. After supper she sprawled in the middle of the room, stretched her legs and, feeling pleasantly weary all over, began wagging her tail. While her new master sat back in an armchair, smoking a cigar, she wagged her tail and kept trying to decide where she liked it better—at this stranger's or at the cabinetmaker's. At the stranger's the furnishings were poor and ugly. Apart from the armchairs, the sofa, the lamp, and the rugs, he had nothing, and the room seemed empty. At the cabinetmaker's, the whole place was chock-full of things: he had a table, a workbench, a pile of wood shavings, planes, chisels, saws, a basin, a goldfinch in a cage . . . The stranger's room had no particular smell, while at the cabinetmaker's there was always a fog and the wonderful smell of glue, varnish, and wood shavings. Still, being with the stranger had one great advantage: he gave her a lot to eat—one must give him full credit—and when she sat by the table with a sweet look on her face, he never once hit her or stamped his foot or shouted: "Get ou-u-ut, curse you!"

When he finished his cigar, her new master went out and came back a moment later carrying a small mattress.

"Hey, pooch, come here!" he said, putting the mattress in the corner near the sofa. "Lie down! Go to sleep!"

Then he turned off the lamp and went out. Kashtanka lay down on the mattress and closed her eyes. She heard barking outside and wanted to answer it, but suddenly she became unexpectedly sad. She remembered Luka Alexandrych, his son Fedyushka, and her cozy place under the workbench . . . She remembered how on long winter evenings while the cabinetmaker was planing a board or reading the newspaper aloud, Fedyushka used to play with her . . . He would drag her from under the workbench by her hind legs and do such tricks with her that everything turned green in her eyes and all her joints hurt. He would make her walk on her hind legs, turn her into a bell by pulling her tail hard, until she squealed and barked, or give her tobacco to sniff . . . Especially tormenting was the following trick: Fedyushka would tie a piece of meat to a string and give it to Kashtanka; then, once she had swallowed it, with loud laughter he would pull it out of her stomach. And the more vivid her memories became, the more loudly and longingly Kashtanka whined.

But weariness and warmth soon overcame her sadness . . . She began to fall asleep. In her mind's eye dogs ran past, among them a shaggy old poodle she had seen that day in the street, blind in one eye, with tufts of fur around his nose. Fedyushka was chasing the poodle with a chisel in his hand; then all at once he too was covered with shaggy fur, and barked merrily next to Kashtanka. Kashtanka

and he sniffed each other's noses goodnatureedly and ran off down the street . . .

### Chapter Three

#### NEW AND VERY PLEASANT ACQUAINTANCES

It was already light when Kashtanka woke up and noise came from the street, as only happens in daytime. There was not a soul in the room. Kashtanka stretched, yawned, and began nosing around in a grumpy mood. She sniffed the corners and the furniture, glanced into the entryway and found nothing interesting. Besides the door to the entryway, there was one other door. Kashtanka thought for a moment, then scratched at the door with both paws, opened it, and went into the next room. There on the bed, under a flannel blanket, a customer lay sleeping. She recognized him as last night's stranger.

"Grrr . . ." she growled. Then, remembering yesterday's supper, she wagged her tail and began sniffing.

She sniffed the stranger's clothes and boots and found that they smelled strongly of horse. In the bedroom was another door, also closed. Kashtanka scratched at this door, too, then leaned her chest against it, opened it, and was immediately aware of a strange, very suspicious smell. Anticipating an unpleasant encounter, growling and glancing around, Kashtanka went into the small room with dirty wallpaper and drew back in fear. She saw something unexpected and terrifying. A gray goose, with its head and neck low to the floor and its wings outstretched, was coming straight at her, hissing. Nearby, on a little mat, lay a white tomcat. Seeing Kashtanka, he jumped up, arched his back, stuck up his tail, and with his fur standing on end, also hissed. Frightened in earnest, but not wanting to show it, the dog barked loudly and rushed at the cat . . . The cat arched his back even more, hissed, and smacked the dog on the head with his paw. Kashtanka jumped back, crouched down on all fours and, stretching her muzzle toward the cat, let out a burst of shrill barking. The goose, meanwhile, came from behind and pecked her painfully on the back. Kashtanka jumped up and lunged at the goose . . .

"What's going on!" shouted a loud, angry voice, and into the room came the stranger, wearing a robe, with a cigar between his teeth. "What's the meaning of all this? Go to your places!"

He went up to the cat, gave him a flick on his arched back, and said, "Fyodor Timofeyich, what's the meaning of this? You started a fight, eh? You old rascal! Lie down!"

And turning to the goose, he shouted, "Ivan Ivanych, to your place!"

The cat obediently lay down on his mat and closed his eyes. From the expression on his face and whiskers, he himself seemed

displeased at losing his temper and getting into a fight. Kashtanka whined, offended, and the goose stretched his neck and began explaining something quickly, ardently, distinctly, but quite incomprehensibly.

"All right, all right," said his master, yawning. "One must live in peace and friendship." He patted Kashtanka and said, "Don't be afraid, rusty . . . They're nice folks, they won't hurt you. What are we going to call you, anyway? You can't go around without a name, brother."

The stranger thought for a moment, and then he said, "I've got it! We'll call you Auntie! Understand . . . ? Auntie!"

And having repeated the word "Auntie" several times, he went out. Kashtanka sat down and kept her eyes open. The cat lay still on his mat, pretending to sleep. The goose, stretching his neck and stamping in place, went on talking about something quickly and ardently. Apparently he was a very smart goose. After each long harangue, he would step back with a look of amazement as if he were delighted by his own speech. Kashtanka listened to him for a while, answered him with a "Grrr," and began sniffing around the corners of the room.

In one corner stood a small trough in which she saw some soaked peas and rye crusts. She tried the peas—no good, tried the crusts—and began to eat. The goose was not offended in the least that a strange dog was eating his feed, and, on the contrary, started talking still more ardently, and, to show his confidence, went to the trough himself and ate a few peas.

#### Chapter Four

##### FEATS OF WONDER

After a while, the stranger came back in carrying an odd thing that looked like a sawhorse. A bell hung from the crosspiece of this wooden, crudely-made sawhorse, and there was also a pistol tied to it. Strings were tied to the clapper of the bell and the trigger of the pistol. The stranger set the sawhorse down in the middle of the room, spent a long time tying and untying something, then he turned to the goose and said:

"Ivan Ivanych, front and center!"

The goose came up to him and stood with a look of anticipation.

"All right," said the stranger, "let's begin from the very beginning. First, bow and make a curtsy. Quick, now!"

Ivan Ivanych stretched his neck, nodded his head all around, and scraped the floor with his foot.

"Good boy . . . Now, play dead!"

The goose turned on his back with his feet sticking up in the air. After a few more simple tricks of this sort, the stranger suddenly

clutched his head with an expression of horror and cried, "Fire! Help! The house is burning!"

Ivan Ivanych ran to the sawhorse, took the string in his beak, and rang the bell.

The stranger was very pleased. He stroked the goose's neck and said:

"Good boy, Ivan Ivanych! Now, imagine that you're a jeweler and sell gold and diamonds. Now imagine that you come to your shop one day and find robbers there. What would you do in that case?"

The goose took the other string in his beak and pulled. A deafening shot rang out. Kashtanka, who had liked the bell ringing very much, was so delighted by the pistol shot that she ran around the sawhorse barking.

"Auntie, to your place!" the stranger shouted. "No barking!"

The shooting was not the end of Ivan Ivanych's workout. For a whole hour more, the stranger drove the goose around him on a tether, cracking his whip while the goose had to leap over a hurdle, jump through a hoop, and rear up on his tail with his feet waving in the air. Kashtanka couldn't keep her eyes off of Ivan Ivanych, howled with delight, and several times started to run after him, yelping. Having worn out the goose and himself as well, the stranger mopped his brow and shouted:

"Marya, tell Khavronya Ivanovna to come here!"

A moment later, grunting was heard. Kashtanka growled, put on a brave expression, and moved closer to the stranger, just in case. The door opened and an old woman looked in, muttered something, and let in a very ugly black pig. Paying no attention at all to Kashtanka's growling, the pig raised her snout and grunted happily. She seemed very pleased to see her master, Ivan Ivanych, and the cat. She came up to the cat and gently nudged him under his stomach with her snout, then struck up a conversation with the goose. Her movements, her voice, and the quivering of her tail expressed nothing but good nature. Kashtanka realized at once that it was useless to growl and bark at such a character.

The master took away the sawhorse and shouted:

"Fyodor Timofeyich, front and center!"

The cat got up, stretched lazily, and reluctantly, as if doing a favor, went over to the pig.

"We'll start with the Egyptian Pyramid," said the master.

He spent a long time explaining something, then gave the command, "One . . . two . . . three!" At the word "three," Ivan Ivanych flapped his wings and jumped up onto the pig's bristly back . . . When he had steadied himself by balancing with his wings and neck, Fyodor Timofeyich slowly and lazily, with obvious scorn, looking as if he despised his art and would not give a penny for it,

climbed onto the pig's back, then reluctantly got up on the goose and stood on his hind legs. The result was what the stranger called the "Egyptian Pyramid." Kashtanka yapped with delight, but at that moment the old tomcat yawned, lost his balance, and tumbled off the goose. Ivan Ivanych wobbled and fell off, too. The stranger yelled, waved his arms, and began explaining again. After working for a whole hour on the pyramid, the untiring master began teaching Ivan Ivanych to ride the cat, then he started teaching the cat to smoke, and so on.

The lessons ended, the stranger mopped his brow and went out. Fyodor Timofeyich sniffed scornfully, lay down on his mat, and closed his eyes. Ivan Ivanych went to the trough, and the pig was led away by the old woman. The day was so full of new impressions that Kashtanka did not notice where the time went. In the evening, she and her mattress were installed in the room with the dirty wallpaper, where she spent the night in the company of Fyodor Timofeyich and the goose.

### Chapter Five

#### TALENT! TALENT!

A month went by.

Kashtanka was already used to having a nice dinner every evening and to being called Auntie. She was used to the stranger and to her new companions. Life went on smoothly and comfortably.

Each day began in the same way. Ivan Ivanych usually woke up first, and he immediately went over to Auntie or the cat, curved his neck, and began talking ardently and persuasively but, as ever, incomprehensibly. Sometimes he held his head high and delivered a long monologue. At first, Kashtanka thought he talked so much because he was very smart, but after a while she lost all respect for him. When he came up to her with his endless speeches, she no longer wagged her tail but treated him as an annoying babbler who wouldn't let anyone sleep, and answered him unceremoniously with a "Grrr . . . !"

Fyodor Timofeyich, however, was a gentleman of a very different sort. When he woke up, he didn't make any noise, he didn't move, he didn't even open his eyes. He would have been glad not to wake up at all for he was obviously none too fond of life. Nothing interested him, he treated everything sluggishly and carelessly, despised everything, and even snorted squeamishly at his delicious dinners.

On waking up, Kashtanka would start walking around the room and sniffing in the corners. Only she and the cat were allowed to walk all over the apartment; the goose had no right to cross the threshold of the little room with dirty wallpaper, and Khavronya

Ivanovna lived somewhere in a shed out back and only appeared for lessons. The master slept late, had his tea, and immediately started working on his tricks. Every day the sawhorse, the whip, and the hoops were brought into the room, and every day almost the same things were repeated. The lessons lasted for three or four hours and sometimes left Fyodor Timofeyich so exhausted he staggered like a drunken man, while Ivan Ivanych opened his beak and gasped for breath and the master got red in the face and couldn't mop the sweat from his brow fast enough.

Lessons and dinner made the days very interesting, but the evenings were rather boring. Usually, in the evening, the master went out somewhere and took the goose and the cat with him. Left alone, Auntie would lie down on her mattress, feeling sad . . . Sadness crept up on her somehow imperceptibly and came over her gradually, as darkness falls upon a room. She would lose all desire to bark, to eat, to run through the rooms, or even to look. Then two vague figures would appear in her imagination, not quite dogs, not quite people, with sympathetic, dear, but incomprehensible physiognomies; but when they appeared, Auntie began wagging her tail, and it seemed to her that somewhere, sometime, she had known and loved them . . . And each time, as she was falling asleep, these figures brought to mind the smell of glue, wood shavings, and varnish.

One day, when she was already accustomed to her new life, and had turned from a skinny, bony mutt into a sleek, well-cared-for dog, her master came to her, stroked her, and said:

"Auntie, it's time you got to work. Enough of this sitting around. I want to make an artiste out of you . . . Would you like to be an artiste?"

And he began teaching her all sorts of things. The first lesson she learned was to stand and walk on her hind legs, which she enjoyed greatly. For the second lesson, she had to jump on her hind legs and catch a piece of sugar that her teacher held high above her head. In the lessons that followed, she danced, ran on the tether, howled to music, rang the bell, and fired the pistol, and in a month she could successfully take Fyodor Timofeyich's place in the Egyptian Pyramid. She was an eager student and was pleased with her own achievements; running, her tongue hanging out, on a tether, jumping through a hoop, and riding on old Fyodor Timofeyich afforded her the greatest pleasure. She followed each successful trick with a joyful, delighted yapping. Her teacher, surprised, was also delighted and rubbed his hands.

"Talent! Talent!" he said. "Unquestionable talent! You'll be a positive success!"

And Auntie got so used to the word "talent" that she jumped up each time her master said it, and looked around as if it was her name.

*Chapter Six*

## A TROUBLED NIGHT

Auntie had a dog dream one night that a janitor was chasing her with a broom, and she woke up in a fright.

Her little room was quiet, dark, and very stuffy. The fleas were biting. Auntie had never been afraid of the dark before, but now for some reason she was terrified and felt like barking. In the next room, her master sighed loudly, then, a little later, the pig grunted in her shed, and then everything was silent again. One always feels easier at heart when thinking about food, so Auntie began thinking about a chicken leg she had stolen from Fyodor Timofeyich that day and hidden in the living room between the cupboard and the wall, where there were many cobwebs and a lot of dust. It might not be a bad idea to go and see if the leg was still there. It was quite possible that her master had found it and eaten it. But she was forbidden to leave the room before morning—that was the rule. Auntie closed her eyes, hoping to fall asleep quickly, because she knew from experience that the sooner one falls asleep, the sooner morning comes. But suddenly, not far from her, a strange scream rang out that made her shudder and jump to her feet. It was Ivan Ivanych, and the scream was not his usual persuading babble but a wild, piercing and unnatural shriek, like the creaking of a gate opening. Unable to see or understand anything in the darkness, Auntie felt all the more frightened and growled:

“Gr-r . . .”

Some time passed, as long as it takes to gnaw a good bone, but the scream was not repeated. Auntie gradually calmed down and began to doze off. She dreamed of two big black dogs with clumps of last year’s fur on their haunches and flanks; they were greedily eating mash from a big basin, which gave off white steam and a very delicious smell. Every once in a while they turned around to Auntie, bared their teeth, and snarled, “We won’t give you any!” Then a peasant in a sheepskin coat ran out of the house and chased them away with a whip. Auntie went over to the basin and started to eat, but no sooner had the man gone out the gate than the two black dogs rushed growling at her, and suddenly, there was another piercing scream.

“Ka-ghee! Ka-ghee-ghee!” cried Ivan Ivanych.

Auntie woke up, jumped to her feet, and not leaving her mattress broke into a howling bark. This time it seemed to her that it was not Ivan Ivanych but someone else, some stranger, who was screaming. For some reason, the pig grunted again in her shed.

There was the sound of shuffling slippers, and the master came into the room in his robe, carrying a candle. The wavering light

danced over the dirty wallpaper and the ceiling and chased away the darkness. Auntie saw that there was no stranger in the room. Ivan Ivanych was sitting on the floor. He was not asleep. His wings were spread wide, his beak was open, and generally he looked as if he were very tired and thirsty. Old Fyodor Timofeyich was not asleep either. He, too, must have been awakened by the scream.

“What’s wrong, Ivan Ivanych?” the master asked the goose. “Why are you screaming? Are you sick?”

The goose was silent. The master felt his neck, stroked his back, and said:

“You’re a funny one. You don’t sleep yourself, and you won’t let anyone else sleep.”

When the master went out and took the light with him, darkness came again. Auntie was afraid. The goose did not scream, but again it began to seem to her that a stranger was standing in the dark. The most frightening thing was that she could not bite this stranger, because he was invisible and had no form. And for some reason she thought that something very bad was bound to happen that night. Fyodor Timofeyich was restless too. Auntie heard him stirring on his mat, yawning and shaking his head.

Somewhere outside there was a knocking at a gate, and the pig grunted in the shed. Auntie whined, stretched her front paws out, and put her head on them. In the knocking at the gate, in the grunting of the pig, who for some reason was not asleep, in the darkness and silence, she imagined something as anguished and terrifying as Ivan Ivanych’s scream. Everything was uneasy and anxious, but why? Who was this stranger who could not be seen? Now next to Auntie two dull green sparks lit up. It was Fyodor Timofeyich, who approached her for the first time in their acquaintance. What did he want? Auntie licked his paw and, not asking why he had come, howled softly in different voices.

“Ka-ghee!” cried Ivan Ivanych. “Ka-ghee-ghee!”

The door opened again, and the master came in with the candle. The goose was still in the same position, with his beak open and his wings spread. His eyes were shut.

“Ivan Ivanych!” the master called.

The goose did not move. The master sat down on the floor in front of him, looked at him silently for a moment, and said, “Ivan Ivanych, what’s the matter? Are you dying or something? Ah, now I remember, I remember!” he cried, clutching his head. “I know what it is! It’s because that horse stepped on you today! My God! My God!”

Auntie did not understand what her master was saying, but from the look on his face she saw that he, too, was expecting something terrible. She stretched her muzzle towards the dark window, through which it seemed to her some stranger was looking, and howled.

"He's dying, Auntie!" her master said, clasping his hands. "Yes, yes, dying! Death has come to your room! What are we to do?"

Pale and disturbed, the master went back to his bedroom, sighing and shaking his head. Auntie dreaded being left in the dark, so she followed him. He sat down on his bed and said several times, "My God! What are we going to do?"

Auntie walked around his feet and, not understanding what was causing him such anguish and where all this agitation came from, but trying to understand, she watched his every movement. Fyodor Timofeyich, who rarely left his mat, also came into the master's bedroom and began rubbing against his legs. He shook his head, as if he wanted to shake the painful thoughts out of it, and looked suspiciously under the bed.

The master took a saucer, poured some water into it from a washstand, and went back to the goose.

"Drink, Ivan Ivanych," he said tenderly, setting the saucer down in front of him. "Drink, my dear."

But Ivan Ivanych did not move or open his eyes. The master brought his head down to the saucer and dipped his beak in the water, but the goose did not drink; he only spread his wings wider and let his head lie in the saucer.

"No, there's nothing we can do!" the master sighed. "It's all over. Ivan Ivanych is done for!"

And glittering drops, such as one sees on windowpanes when it rains, crept down his cheeks. Not understanding what was wrong, Auntie and Fyodor Timofeyich huddled close to him, staring in horror at the goose.

"Poor Ivan Ivanych!" said the master, sighing mournfully. "And I was dreaming of how I'd take you to the country in the spring, and we'd go for a walk in the green grass. Dear animal, my good comrade, you're no more! How can I manage now without you?"

It seemed to Auntie that the same thing was going to happen to her—that she, too, for some unknown reason, would close her eyes, stretch out her paws, bare her teeth, and everybody would look at her with horror. Apparently, similar thoughts were wandering through Fyodor Timofeyich's head. Never before had the old cat been so sullen and gloomy as now.

Dawn was breaking, and the invisible stranger who had frightened Auntie so much was no longer in the room. When it was already quite light, the janitor came, picked the goose up by the legs, and carried him out. Later the old woman came and took away the trough.

Auntie went to the living room and looked behind the cupboard. The master had not eaten her chicken leg; it was still there, covered with dust and cobwebs. But Auntie felt dull, sad, and wanted to cry.

She didn't even sniff the leg. She got under the sofa, lay down, and began to whine softly in a thin voice:

"Hnnn . . . hnnn . . . hnnn . . ."<sup>2</sup>

### Chapter Seven

#### AN UNSUCCESSFUL DEBUT

One fine evening the master walked into the room with the dirty wallpaper and, rubbing his hands, said:

"Well . . ."

He wanted to say something more, but did not say it and left. Auntie had made a close study of his face and voice during her lessons, and she could tell that he was nervous, worried, maybe even angry. A little later he came back and said:

"Today I'll take Auntie and Fyodor Timofeyich with me. In the Egyptian Pyramid, you, Auntie, will replace the late Ivan Ivanych today. Devil knows what will come of it! Nothing's ready, nothing's been learned, we haven't rehearsed enough! It'll be a disgrace, a flop!"

Then he went out again and came back after a minute in a fur coat and top hat. Going over to the cat, he picked him up by the front paws and put him on his chest inside the fur coat, to which Fyodor Timofeyich seemed very indifferent and did not even bother opening his eyes. For him, clearly, it was decidedly all the same: to lie down, or to be picked up by the feet, to sprawl on his mat, or to rest on his master's chest under the fur coat . . .

"Let's go, Auntie," said the master.

Understanding nothing, Auntie wagged her tail and followed him. A moment later she was sitting in a sleigh at her master's feet, and heard him say, shivering with cold and worry:

"It'll be a disgrace! A flop!"

The sleigh pulled up in front of a large, peculiar building that looked like an upside-down soup tureen. The long, wide entrance of the building with its three glass doors was lighted by a dozen bright lanterns. The doors opened with a clang and, like mouths, swallowed up the people who were milling around by the entrance. There were many people; horses, too, trotted up to the entrance, but there were no dogs to be seen.

The master picked Auntie up and shoved her under his coat with Fyodor. It was dark and stuffy there, but it was warm. Two dull green sparks flashed for a second—the cat, disturbed by his neighbor's cold, rough paws, opened his eyes. Auntie licked his ear and, trying

2. The actual sound is "skū- skū- skū," picking up on the ū sounds in the preceding lines: *skūchno* (dull), *grūstno* (sad), *skūlit'* (whine). See Radislav Lapushin's discussion of this passage on p. 582 of this volume.



to make herself comfortable, squirmed and crushed the cat under her cold paws and accidentally stuck her head out of the fur coat, but at once gave an angry growl and ducked back inside. She thought she had seen a huge, poorly-lit room full of monsters. Horrible heads peered out from the partitions and bars that lined both sides of the room: horses, things with horns or with enormous ears, and one huge fat mug with a tail where its nose should be and two long gnawed bones sticking out of its mouth.

The cat meowed hoarsely under Auntie's paws, but at that moment the coat was thrown open, the master said, "Hup!" and Fyodor Timofeyich and Auntie jumped to the floor. They were now in a small room with gray plank walls; here, besides a small table with a mirror, a stool, and rags hanging everywhere, there was no furniture at all, and instead of a lamp or a candle, a fan-shaped light attached to a little tube in the wall was burning brightly. Fyodor Timofeyich licked his fur where Auntie had rumped it, got under the stool and lay down. The master, still nervous and rubbing his hands, began to undress . . . He undressed in the same way he usually did at home, preparing to lie down under the flannel blanket, that is, he took off everything except his underclothes, then sat on the stool and, looking in the mirror, started doing the most amazing things to himself. First he put on a wig with a part down the middle and two tufts of hair sticking up like horns. Then he smeared a thick coat of white stuff on his face, and over the white he painted eyebrows, a mustache, and red spots on his cheeks. But his antics did not stop there. Having made such a mess of his face and neck, he began getting into an outlandish, incongruous costume, unlike anything Auntie had ever seen before either in the house or in the street. Imagine a pair of the baggiest trousers made out of chintz, with a big flowery print such as are used in tradesmen's houses for curtains or slipcovers, trousers that came up to the armpits, one leg of brown chintz, the other of bright yellow. Having sunk into them, the master then put on a short chintz jacket with a big ruffled collar and a gold star on the back, socks of different colors, and green shoes . . .

Auntie's eyes and soul were dazzled. The white-faced, baggy figure smelled like her master, the voice was her master's familiar voice, yet at moments she had great doubts and almost wanted to back away and bark at this colorful figure. The new place, the fan-shaped light, the smell, the metamorphosis that had come over her master—all this instilled a vague fear in her and a presentiment that she was sure to meet some horror like a fat mug with a tail in place of a nose. What's more, they were playing hateful music somewhere outside the wall and every now and then an incomprehensible roar was heard. One thing alone reassured her—that was Fyodor

Timofeyich's imperturbability. He was most quietly napping under the stool, and didn't open his eyes even when the stool was moved.

A man in a tailcoat and white vest looked into the room and said: "Miss Arabella is just going on. You're next."

The master didn't answer. He took a small suitcase from under the table, sat down, and waited. From his trembling lips and hands one could see that he was nervous, and Auntie could hear him breathing in short gasps.

"Monsieur George, you're on!" someone shouted outside the door. The master stood up, crossed himself three times, took the cat from under the stool, and put him in the suitcase.

"Come, Auntie," he said softly.

Auntie, understanding nothing, went up to him. He kissed her on the head and put her in next to Fyodor Timofeyich. Then it became dark . . . Auntie stepped all over the cat, and clawed at the sides of the suitcase, and was so terrified that she could not utter a sound. The suitcase rocked and swayed as if it were floating on water . . .

"Here I am!" the master shouted loudly. "Here I am!" After this shout, Auntie felt the suitcase hit against something solid and stop swaying. There was a loud, deep roar. It sounded as if someone were being slapped, and someone—probably the fat mug with a tail where its nose should be—roared and laughed so loudly that the latch on the suitcase rattled. In response to the roar, the master laughed in a shrill, squeaky voice, not at all the way he laughed at home.

"Ha!" he yelled, trying to shout out the roar. "Most esteemed public! I've just come from the station! My granny dropped dead and left me an inheritance! The suitcase is very heavy—gold, obviously . . . Ha-a! And suddenly we've got a million here! Let's open it right now and have a look . . ."

The latch clicked. Bright light struck Auntie's eyes. She jumped out of the suitcase and, deafened by the roar, ran around her master as fast as she could go, yelping all the while.

"Ha!" shouted the master. "Uncle Fyodor Timofeyich! Dear Auntie! My nice relatives, devil take you all!"

He fell down on the sand, grabbed Auntie and the cat, and started hugging them. Auntie, while he was squeezing her in his embrace, caught a glimpse of that world which fate had brought her to and, struck by its immensity, froze for a moment in amazement and rapture, then tore herself from his arms and, from the keenness of the impression, spun in place like a top. This new world was big and full of bright light, and everywhere she looked from floor to ceiling there were faces, faces, nothing but faces.

"Auntie, allow me to offer you a seat!" the master shouted.

Remembering what that meant, Auntie jumped up on the chair and sat. She looked at her master. His eyes were serious and kind,

as usual, but his face, especially his mouth and teeth, were distorted by a wide, fixed grin. He himself guffawed, leaped about, hunched his shoulders, and pretended to be very happy in front of the thousands of faces. Auntie believed in his happiness, and suddenly felt with her whole body that those thousands of faces were all looking at her, and she raised her foxlike head and howled joyfully.

"Sit there, Auntie," the master said to her, "while Uncle and I dance a kamarinsky."<sup>3</sup>

Fyodor Timofeyich, while waiting until he was forced to do stupid things, stood and glanced about indifferently. He danced sluggishly, carelessly, glumly, and by his movements, by his tail and whiskers, one could see that he deeply despised the crowd, the bright lights, his master, and himself . . . Having done his part, he yawned and sat down.

"Well, Auntie," said the master, "now you and I will sing a song, and then we'll dance. All right?"

He took a little flute from his pocket and started playing. Auntie, who couldn't stand music, fidgeted on her chair uneasily and howled. Roars and applause came from all sides. The master bowed, and when things quieted down, he continued playing . . . Just as he hit a very high note, someone high up in the audience gasped loudly.

"Daddy!" a child's voice cried. "That's Kashtanka!"

"Kashtanka it is!" confirmed a cracked, drunken voice. "Kashtanka! Fedyushka, so help me God, it's Kashtanka! Phweet!"

A whistle came from the top row, and two voices, one a boy's and the other a man's, called out:

"Kashtanka! Kashtanka!"

Auntie was startled, and looked in the direction of the voices. Two faces—one hairy, drunk, and grinning and the other chubby, pink-cheeked, and frightened—struck her eyes as the bright light had done earlier . . . She remembered, fell off the chair, floundered in the sand, jumped up, and with a joyful yelp ran toward those faces. There was a deafening roar, pierced by whistles and the shrill shout of a child:

"Kashtanka! Kashtanka!"

Auntie jumped over the barrier, then over someone's shoulder, and landed in a box seat. To get to the next tier, she had to leap a high wall. She leaped, but not high enough, and slid back down the wall. Then she was picked up and passed from hand to hand, she licked hands and faces, she kept getting higher and higher, and at last she reached the top row . . .

Half an hour later, Kashtanka was walking down the street, following the people who smelled of glue and varnish. Luka

3. Russian folk dance.

Alexandrych staggered as he went, and instinctively, having been taught by experience, kept as far as possible from the gutter.

"Lying in the abyss of sinfulness in my womb . . ."<sup>4</sup> he muttered. "And you, Kashtanka, are a bewilderment. Compared to a man, you're like a carpenter compared to a cabinetmaker."

Fedyushka walked beside him wearing his father's cap. Kashtanka watched their backs, and it seemed to her that she had been following them all along, rejoicing that her life had not been interrupted for a single moment.

She remembered the little room with dirty wallpaper, the goose, Fyodor Timofeyich, the tasty dinners, the lessons, the circus, but it all now seemed to her like a long, confused, and painful dream . . .

1887

### Without a Title<sup>†</sup>

In the fifth century, the sun used to rise every morning and lie down to sleep every evening just as it does now. In the morning, as the first sunbeams kissed the dew, the earth would come to life and the air would fill with sounds of joy, hope, and delight, while in the evening the same earth would fall silent and be swallowed by stern darkness. Day was like day, night like night. From time to time a storm cloud brought an angry rumble of thunder, or a star fell from the sky, or a pale monk ran by and told the brothers how he had seen a tiger not far from the monastery—but that was all, and once again day would be like day, and night like night.

The monks worked and prayed to God, and their old Abbot played the organ, composed verse in Latin, and wrote music. This wonderful old man had an unusual gift. He played the organ with such artistry that even the very oldest monks, whose hearing was fading as they neared the end of their lives, were unable to keep back their tears as the sounds of the organ were carried to them from his cell. When he spoke about even the most everyday things—trees, for example, or animals, or the sea—it was impossible to listen to him without smiling or shedding a tear, and it seemed as if the same chords were sounding in his soul as in the organ. And if he was angered or overtaken by great joy, or if he began to speak about something terrible and sublime, a passionate inspiration would seize hold of him, tears would appear in his flashing eyes, his face would

4. "Lying in the abyss of sinfulness" is from the Orthodox vespers, to which Luka again adds his favorite "in my womb." [*Translators' note.*]

† Trans. Robert Chandler for this Norton Critical Edition.