

**THE  
DEATH  
OF IVAN  
ILYCH**

**LEO  
TOLSTOY**

**THE ART OF THE NOVELLA**

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# THE DEATH OF IVAN ILYCH

LEO  
TOLSTOY

TRANSLATED BY IAN DREIBLATT

 MELVILLE HOUSE PUBLISHING  
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Within the edifice of the Public Courts, the advocates and prosecutor from the proceedings of the Melvinski trial spent a recess together in the office of Ivan Yegorovich Shebek, and a conversation arose about the details of the well-known Krasovski case. Fyodor Vasilyevich maintained heatedly that it was beyond their jurisdiction; Ivan Yegorovich insisted on the opposite; while Pyotr Ivanovich stayed out of the debate, lazing instead through the day's *Gazette*, which had just arrived.

"Gentlemen! It seems that Ivan Ilych has died."

"Is that so?"

"Here, read for yourself," he told Fyodor Vasilyevich, handing him the paper, its ink still damp.

Bordered in black were the words: *Praskovya Fedorovna Golovina with deepest sadness informs her relatives and acquaintances of the passing of her beloved spouse, member of the Court of Justice Ivan Ilych Golovin, on February 4th of this year, 1882. The funeral will be Friday at one o'clock in the afternoon.*

Ivan Ilych had been a colleague to all of the assembled men, and they had all liked him. He'd been ill for weeks with a disease said incurable. His post had been kept open for him, but rumors had swirled that in the event of his death Alekseyev might replace him, and either Vinnikov or Shtabel might then rise to replace Alekseyev. And so it was that each man in the office, on learning of the death of Ivan Ilych, thought first of what implications the death might hold for him, what reshufflings it might occasion for him and his colleagues.

*Likely I'll be promoted to either Shtabel or Vinnikov's job, Fyodor Vasilyevich thought. It's long been promised to me, and it'll mean an eight hundred ruble raise per year, not to mention a new office.*

*Now I'll have to apply to have my wife's brother transferred from Kaluga, Pyotr Ivanovich thought. She'll be so happy. She won't be able to complain anymore that I never do anything for her family.*

"I did suspect he'd never recover," Pyotr Ivanovich said aloud. "It's too bad."

"But what did he actually have?"

"The doctors couldn't say—or they could, but each said something different. When I last saw him I thought he'd recover."

"And I haven't been over to see him since before the holidays! I kept meaning to go."

"So, did he have any property?"

"I think his wife has a little bit—but really just a trifle."

"Well, we'll have to go out there. They lived awfully far away."

"You mean they lived awfully far away from you. Everything's far from you."

"He just can't ever let me off the hook for living across the river," Pyotr Ivanovich said, smiling to Shebek. And they discussed distances between places in the city, and went back to the courtroom.

Apart from the curiosity it gave them about the changes in office it might occasion, the very fact of the death of a close acquaintance awoke as ever in each of them a familiar gladness: it's *he* who's dead, not me.

Each of them either thought or felt, *Well, certainly, he's dead, but, after all, I'm not. The*

close acquaintances, the so-called friends, of Ivan Ilych, could think only of the litany of banal obligations they'd have to meet, the funeral to endure, the visit to pay the widow.

Fyodor Vasilyevich and Pyotr Ivanovich were closer than the others.

Pyotr Ivanovich had been a friend since law school and considered himself in Ivan Ilych's debt.

Having told his wife at dinner the news of Ivan Ilych's death and the possibility of his brother being transferred to their circuit, Pyotr Ivanovich, ignoring his usual evening relaxation, threw on his coattails and headed to Ivan Ilych's house.

At the gateway to the house stood a carriage and two coachmen. Downstairs, the hallway leading in was cluttered by a hat rack and a coffin lid that had been polished and decorated with tassels and gold-cord. Two ladies in black were shedding their minks. One of them, Ivan Ilych's sister, was an acquaintance of his; with the other face he was unfamiliar. Pyotr Ivanovich's colleague, Shvarts, had been headed downstairs, but, catching sight of him from the top step, stopped and winked, as though to say, *Ivan Ilych left his affairs in a clumsy mess. You and I are a different sort.*

Shvarts's face with its British-style mustachios and the slender figure he cut in his coattails had, as ever, an elegant solemnity, and this solemnity, always at odds with his playful spirit here was rather piquant. Or so it seemed to Pyotr Ivanovich.

Pyotr Ivanovich waved the ladies ahead of him and slowly followed them to the stairs. Shvarts waited in place, and Pyotr Ivanovich quickly realized: he wanted to try and figure out a good spot for their next whist game. The ladies headed upstairs to the widow, and Shvarts's lips pressed together solemnly but with a playful look in his eyes, indicated by a twitch of his brow a room to his right where the body was.

Pyotr Ivanovich went in, as one always does, unsure of what to do. All he knew was that to cross oneself is never offensive. But as for whether he should bow while doing so, he had no idea, and so he decided on a moderate course of action: entering the room, he crossed himself and bent a little at the knee, while he quickly scanned the room as best the movements of his arms and head allowed. There were two young people, possibly relatives, one still in high school, on their way out. An old woman standing motionless. And a lady with strangely arched eyebrows telling her something in a whisper. A vigorous, resolute assistant deacon in a frock coat was reading something loudly and with an expression that made any disagreement impossible. The butler's assistant, Gerasim, stepped lightly in front of Pyotr Ivanovich and sprinkled something across the floor. Watching him, Pyotr Ivanovich became suddenly aware of the faintly perceptible smell of a decaying body. He'd seen Gerasim on his last visit here, acting as a nurse to Ivan Ilych, who had always especially liked him. Pyotr Ivanovich continued crossing himself and bowed slightly in the direction of the coffin, the preacher, and some icons on a table in the corner. After a while, when he realized he'd been making the sign of the cross for too long, he stopped and began looking at the corpse.

The dead man was lying, as dead men always lie, especially heavily, his deadened limbs forever sinking into the cushions, his head forever bowing on the pillow, and he was on display, as dead men are always put on display, with his waxen yellow forehead speckled with bald spots and his nose sticking up as though pressing into his upper lip. He had changed much and grown even thinner since Pyotr Ivanovich had last seen him, but, as always happens after death, his face had grown handsomer, more dignified—more distinguished,

short, than it had ever been in life. The expression on his face seemed to say that what had needed to be done had been done, and done right. Beside this his expression also seemed to hold a warning, a reproach to the living. This seemed out of place to Pyotr Ivanovich, or, at least, inapplicable to him. Suddenly uncomfortable, Pyotr Ivanovich abruptly crossed himself one more time and hurriedly—maybe too hurriedly for propriety's sake, he worried—headed back out of the room.

Shvarts was waiting for him in the hallway, legs in a wide stance, fiddling with his top hat behind his back. Just the sight of that proper, elegant man brought Pyotr Ivanovich all the refreshment he needed. He felt that Shvarts stood above all this and would never surrender to the morbidities of convention. One glance at him said it: the observance of Ivan Ilych's funeral couldn't possibly suffice to break his commitment to his evening plans—that is, that nothing would get in the way of his playing cards that night, keep him from opening a new pack while the footman placed four new candles around the table; there was no reason on earth why the funeral proceedings should stop them from enjoying their evening. He said as much, in a whisper, as Pyotr Ivanovich was walking past, suggesting that they meet up at Fyodor Vasilyevich's. But apparently Pyotr Ivanovich wasn't fated to play whist that evening. The widow Praskovya Federovna—a short, fat woman who, despite every effort to the contrary, had continued a steady sidewise expansion from top to bottom—emerged from her bedroom with some other ladies. She was dressed all in black, with a lace veil shadowing her eyebrows arched in the same odd manner as the woman's by the coffin. She stopped with the others at the door to the room where her husband lay, and said, "The service will begin in a moment. Please come in."

Shvarts bowed vaguely, then stood still, not accepting and not declining this invitation. Praskovya Federovna, recognizing Pyotr Ivanovich, let out a heavy sigh, walked up to him, and took hold of his hand.

"I know you were a true friend to Ivan Ilych ..." And she looked at him, waiting for a response in kind.

Pyotr Ivanovich knew that just as he had needed to cross himself earlier, here he needed to press her hand, and breathe haltingly, and say, *Believe it!* And so he did exactly that, receiving exactly the response he'd desired: he was touched, and she was touched.

"Come, before the service begins. I need to speak with you," the widow said. "Give me your hand."

Pyotr Ivanovich gave her his hand, and they headed for the interior rooms, passing Shvarts, who winked sadly to Pyotr Ivanovich, a communicative, playful wink that seemed to say, *That's it for whist! Don't be mad if we find someone else to play. We'll just cut you in if you get a chance to escape.*

Pyotr Ivanovich sighed still more sadly and profoundly, and Praskovya Federovna squeezed his hand in thanks. Entering the drawing room, upholstered in pink cretonne and lit by a milky lamp, they sat at a table, she on a low sofa and Pyotr Ivanovich on a hassock whose springs shuddered oddly under his weight. Praskovya Federovna wanted to warn him to find another seat, but found that this warning would be incongruous with her present state and so decided against it. Sitting on this hassock, Pyotr Ivanovich remembered how Ivan Ilych had set this room up, and sought his advice concerning this same pink cretonne with its green leaves. As she had walked past the table to sit down (the whole room was crowded

with furniture and bric-a-brac), the widow had caught her black shawl on one of its corners. Pyotr Ivanovich got up to detach it, and the springs of the hassock, freed of his tyrannical weight, bounced up and nudged him. The widow started unhooking it herself, and so Pyotr Ivanovich sat back down, quelling the rebellion of the hassock. But she couldn't quite manage it, and Pyotr Ivanovich rose again, freeing the hassock to rebel against him. It even creaked. When all this was over, Praskovya Fedorovna produced a cleanly laundered cambric handkerchief and began weeping. The episode with the shawl and his war against the hassock had cooled his emotions somewhat, and Pyotr Ivanovich just sat now, looking miserable. That was the plodding state of affairs that Sokolov, Ivan Ilych's butler, interrupted with the news that the gravesite Praskovya Fedorovna had requested would cost two hundred rubles. She stopped weeping and, turning to Pyotr Ivanovich with a put-upon look, said in French that things were very difficult for her. Pyotr Ivanovich gave a silent signal that he saw no room for doubt as much.

"Have a cigarette, please," she said to him in a voice at once magnanimous and decimated, and turned back to Sokolov and the question of the price of the grave. Lighting up, Pyotr Ivanovich heard her ask in great detail about various cemetery plots, and then issue very firm instructions about which grave to buy. Besides that, she gave some very specific instructions for the choir. And then Sokolov left.

"I do everything myself," she told Pyotr Ivanovich, pushing the albums on the table to one side; and then, noticing that his cigarette ash threatened the tabletop, she passed him an ashtray without delay and said, "I find it pretentious to say that my grief prevents me from taking care of practical matters. On the contrary, if anything can—I don't want to say console me—but if anything can take my mind off it, it's seeing to his affairs." She again produced her handkerchief, as though about to cry, but then suddenly seemed to grab hold of herself and spoke much more easily:

"I have something to discuss with you."

Pyotr Ivanovich leaned forward, trying carefully to control the springs of the hassock, which groaned and shifted under him regardless.

"In his last days he suffered terribly."

"Did he?" Pyotr Ivanovich asked.

"Oh, it was awful! For the last few hours—not minutes, mind you, but hours—he cried out constantly. For days he shouted in anguish. It was intolerable. I do not even understand how he withstood it. You could hear him three doors down. Oh, what I've been through!"

"And was he really aware of his surroundings?" Pyotr Ivanovich asked.

"Yes," she whispered, "to the last minute. He bid us goodbye a quarter-hour before he died and asked that we bring Volodya elsewhere."

The thought of such suffering in someone he'd known so well, first as a carefree little boy, then in school, and later as an adult and colleague, suddenly filled Pyotr Ivanovich with horror, despite even this woman's affectation, as well as his own, which it was unpleasant to notice. All at once he couldn't shake the image of that forehead, the nose pressing into the lip, and he was afraid for himself.

*Three days of horrible suffering, followed by death. That could happen to me at any moment,* he thought, and a true terror came over him. But then right away, without his quite knowing how, the more customary thought came to him that this had happened to Ivan Ilych and not



to him, that this should not and could not happen to him; that, in fact, to think in this way gave power to gloom and depression, which, as Shvarts clearly demonstrated, one must not do. And so, having reasoned his way through all this, Pyotr Ivanovich was reassured enough to ask in detail about the death of Ivan Ilych, as though death were a kind of unusual, adventurous process, peculiar to Ivan Ilych, with no bearing on Pyotr Ivanovich himself.

After various details about the truly horrible sufferings Ivan Ilych had endured (which were presented to him solely in terms of their effects on Praskovya Fedorovna's nerves), the widow apparently saw a need to get down to business.

"Oh, Pyotr Ivanovich, it's so difficult, so awfully difficult, how terrible, how terribly hard. She broke down crying again.

Pyotr Ivanovich sighed, and waited for her to blow her nose. When she had, he spoke again. "Believe me ..." and again she began talking, and got to what was, apparently, her main concern. Her questions centered on how she might refer to the death of her husband in requesting a grant from the government. She couched her questions in terms of seeking his advice regarding her pension, but it was immediately apparent to him that she knew everything there was to know on the subject—certainly far more than he did—and what she actually wanted was to find a way of getting more money. Pyotr Ivanovich tried to think something up but couldn't, and after—as a courtesy—condemning the stinginess of the government, he concluded that getting more was impossible. She sighed loudly and began obviously working to get rid of him. He understood, put out his cigarette, stood up, pressed her hand, and headed out to the front room.

In the dining room, with its clock that Ivan Ilych had been so glad he had found in an antique shop, Pyotr Ivanovich met a priest and a few other acquaintances who had just arrived, and then caught sight of a pretty young woman with a familiar face—Ivan Ilych's daughter. She was all in black. Her waist, very slim, seemed even slimmer. She had a gloomy, stubborn, almost hostile look about her. She bowed to Pyotr Ivanovich as though he were to blame for something. Behind her stood a rich young man with the same affronted look, an examining magistrate, her fiancé, as he had heard. He bowed mournfully to the priest and was about to head into the room where the body was when from under the staircase the figure of Ivan Ilych's schoolboy son appeared, with a frightful resemblance to his father. That was the young Ivan Ilych whom Pyotr Ivanovich remembered from school. His eyes were tear-clouded and had the look of thirteen- and fourteen-year-old boys who have dirty thoughts. When he saw Pyotr Ivanovich he scowled with a harsh, shameful uncertainty. Pyotr Ivanovich nodded to him and rejoined the observers of the body. A funeral—candles, moans, incense, tears, blubbering. It was underway. Pyotr Ivanovich stood with a sour look on his face, sinking into his legs. He did not look at the corpse even once, did not give in to any negative thoughts, and was among the first to leave. Nobody was in the vestibule until Gerasim, the butler's assistant, darted out from the dead man's room, and, rummaging with his strong hands through all the coats, found Pyotr Ivanovich's.

"Well, Gerasim, brother ..." Pyotr Ivanovich said to avoid being silent. "Isn't it a shame?"

"It's God's will. We'll all know it," Gerasim answered, flashing his teeth, the orderly with the teeth of a peasant. Then he quickly opened the door of the coach, called out to the driver, helped Pyotr Ivanovich to his seat and leapt back to the porch, as though figuring out exactly what to do next.

The fresh air was a relief after the smell of the incense, and the corpse, and the carbolic acid.

“Where to?” the coachman asked.

“It’s not late. Take me to Fyodor Vasilyevich’s house.”

And Pyotr Ivanovich went there, and found them right at the end of their first rubber—perfect time to deal himself in.

In its details the life of Ivan Ilych was the most simple and the most ordinary and the most horrible.

Ivan Ilych died at the age of forty-five as a member of the Court of Justice. His father, an official in Petersburg, had carved out through various ministries and departments a career path of the sort that ends in an imaginary position. Men in Petersburg hold positions like that when they clearly can no longer function, but have too much seniority and have demonstrated too much loyalty to be dismissed; the solution is a fictional post but with a very real salary of six to ten thousand rubles per year, on which a man can live to a ripe old age.

Just such a man was the Privy Councilor Ilya Yefimovich Golovin, a superfluous member of several superfluous institutions.

Of the three sons he had, Ivan Ilych was the second. The eldest had followed in his father's footsteps, albeit through a different series of ministries, and was fast approaching the age when, as with his father, his inertia would metamorphose into a salary. The youngest son was a failure. He had made a wreck of himself and ended up having to take work on the railways. Both his father and his brothers, and even more so their wives, didn't dislike him so much after a fail, various emergencies notwithstanding, to recollect his very existence. Their sister had married Baron Gref, a functionary in the exact mold of his father-in-law. Ivan Ilych was said to be the *phénix de la famille*, neither cold and arithmetical like his older brother nor ruinously uncivilized as his younger. He was right in the middle—a smart, lively man, nice and proper. He and his younger brother had begun a legal education together; though his brother was kicked out in his fifth year, Ivan Ilych himself completed his studies in good standing. In school he was already just as he would be for the rest of his life: a person of talent, cheerfully kindhearted and sociable, but strict in fulfilling what he reckoned his duty to be, and he reckoned his duty to be whatever his superiors told him it was. He had been nobody's toady, neither as a boy nor later in adulthood, but from the youngest age he had been drawn, as a bird to the air, toward people in the upper echelons of society, adopting their affect and view of life, and maintaining friendships with many of them. All the preoccupations of childhood and youth dissipated from him without leaving a trace; he was given to lust, and to vanity—even, toward the end of school, to liberalism—but was protected by a strong inborn sense of moderation.

At law school he had done some things that earlier would have seemed repugnant to him and been disgusted with himself; but later on, having noticed that people of the highest standing did the same sorts of things and didn't reckon them evil, he didn't reconcile himself to them morally so much as manage utterly to forget about them, and he wasn't troubled at the least by the memories of what had happened.

On finishing law school he qualified for a tenth-rank civil service job and, having received some money from his father for his uniform, Ivan Ilych ordered some clothes from Sharmer's haberdashery, hung a medallion on his watch-chain that said *respice finem*, took leave of his professor and the prince who funded the school, had dinner with his classmates at Donor's restaurant, and, with his fancy new valise, linens, uniform, shaving kit, toiletries, and playing traveling rug—all ordered and bought at the best shops in town—left for the countryside.

where a seat as special secretary to a provincial governor had been secured for him by his father.

On arriving Ivan Ilych immediately set up for himself just as easy and pleasant a lifestyle as he had enjoyed in school. He worked, making a career and at the same time having some good fun; once in a while he traveled out to the districts, where he treated higher-ups and lower-downs alike with dignity. He executed all his orders, which mostly concerned sectarian conflicts, with an exactness and incorruptible honesty of which he could not avoid feeling proud.

In official matters he was, despite his youth and inclination toward frivolous amusement, absolutely disciplined, formal, and even severe; but in society he was often playful and witty and always good-hearted, proper and *bon enfant*, as the governor and his wife—in whose house he was welcome as family—often said of him.

In the provinces he had an affair with a lady who threw herself at the elegant young lawyer; there was also a milliner; and there were rowdy nights spent drinking with visiting aides-de-camp and after-dinner visits to a certain far-off street; and there was a bit of obsequiousness to the governor and even his wife—but all this was gone about with such a ringing tone of decency that nothing too bad could be said of it. It could all be explained in a phrase from the French, *il faut que jeunesse se passe*. Everything was done by clean hands, clean shirts, speaking French words, and, most importantly of all, in the very highest strata of society—that is, approved of by the people of highest standing.

That was how Ivan Ilych worked for five years, until orders came through for a transfer. New judicial institutions were established, and so new people were necessary.

Ivan Ilych became just such a new person.

The post of examining magistrate was offered to Ivan Ilych, and he accepted it even though it was in another province and would mean the loss of all his established connections in favor of new ones. Ivan Ilych's friends saw him off with a group photograph and the presentation of a silver cigarette case.

As an examining magistrate Ivan Ilych was just as *comme il faut*, as proper, as able to maintain his official responsibilities and private life separately from one another, as able to inspire general respect, as he had been in the governor's office. The new office was, for Ivan Ilych, far more interesting and rewarding than his previous post. In his last job it had been fun to stroll lightly in his Sharmer's uniform past the quivering, expectant line of petitioners and officials who envied him, straight into the boss's office, to sit with him over tea and cigarettes. But the people who had actually relied on him, answered to his whims, were few—mostly police officials and, when he was sent out on special assignment, sectarians. He had liked to deal cordially, almost collegially, with these people; he had relished giving them the sense that this man, who could easily bring them to ruin, preferred instead to speak as a friend, to deal plainly. But the truth was that such people had, in his last post, been very few. Now, on the other hand, as an examining magistrate, Ivan Ilych felt that everyone, everyone without exception, even the most self-satisfied people, *everyone* was under his thumb. All he needed to do was scribble a few words down on letterhead and this important, self-satisfied person would be led before him as a defendant or a witness, and if he did not want the man seated he would have to stand, stand before him and answer his questions. Ivan Ilych never abused his new authority; on the contrary, he tried to soften it. But his awareness of his own

power, and the possibility of softening it, imbued his new office with a crowning fascination and deep appeal. In the work itself—that is, in making his investigations—Ivan Ilych very quickly picked up the art of blinding himself to all considerations outside the legal details of the case, and reducing even the most intricate affairs to a bit of simple, prescribed paperwork that totally excluded his own viewpoint and, most importantly, conformed to all required formalities. It was a new kind of legal work. He was one of the first people to put the reforms of 1864 into practice.

Having come into a new town to fill the position of examining magistrate, Ivan Ilych made new acquaintances and connections, re-established himself and adopted a somewhat new manner. He put himself at some respectable distance from the affairs of the governor's office, chose the finest circle of rich jurists and noblemen to associate with, and adopted a tone of breezy discontent with government, a moderate, cosmopolitan liberalism. And so, not having in any way altered the elegance of his toilet, Ivan Ilych stopped shaving his face and offered his beard the freedom to grow where it wanted.

The life of Ivan Ilych developed pleasantly as he settled into his new city. The society there, among whom opposition to the governor was strong, was friendly and good; his salary was greater than before, and whist, which he began to play, brought him real pleasure. He played happily, thinking fast and very subtly, and, for this reason, nearly always winning.

After two years of work in his new city Ivan Ilych met the woman he would marry. Praskovya Fedorovna Mikhel was the most desirable, cleverest, most radiant girl of Ivan Ilych's social scene. Among other amusements and distractions from his work as an examining magistrate Ivan Ilych began a playful, easy flirtation with Praskovya Fedorovna.

Ivan Ilych, when he had been working for the governor, would often go out dancing; as an examining magistrate it was a rare exception. He danced as though only to prove it: *I may be an agent of the reforms, I may have reached the fifth rank, but when it comes to dancing, I'm better than you, and you should know it.* And so occasionally he would, at the close of an evening dance with Praskovya Fedorovna, and it was mainly through these dances that he won her over. She fell in love with him. Ivan Ilych had no fixed matrimonial intentions, but when a girl fell for him he thought, *Well, there's really no sense in not getting married.*

Praskovya Fedorovna came from a good family and wasn't bad-looking; there was a little property. Ivan Ilych might have hoped for a more radiant match, but this one was good enough. He had a salary, and he hoped her property might bring in just as much. A good relationship; she was a sweet, and pretty, and totally dependable woman. To say that Ivan Ilych got married because he'd fallen in love with someone who shared his perspectives on life would be as wrong as saying that he got married because the people of his social circle approved the union. Ivan Ilych got married for both reasons: he did well by himself marrying a woman like Praskovya Fedorovna, and at the same time he did what high society found proper.

So Ivan Ilych got married.

The wedding itself and the beginning of married life, with its new sensuality, new furniture, new crockery, new linens, up until his wife became pregnant, went very well, so well that Ivan Ilych had started to think marriage not only wouldn't spoil but would even sweeten his easy, pleasant, happy life, as approved by society and regarded by himself as natural. But in the first few months of his wife's pregnancy something new emerged.

something so unanticipated and nasty, so heavy and indecent, that it could never have been stopped, and there was no way out of it.

His wife, without any provocation that Ivan Ilych was aware of—*de gaité de coeur*, as he described it to himself—began to shatter the pleasant decorum of their lives: she became jealous of him for no reason, demanded his unshared attentions all the time, carped at everyone, made ugly, brutish scenes in public.

At first Ivan Ilych hoped to wriggle out of the awkwardness of his situation with that same lighthearted yet proper attitude that had served him so well in the past: he tried to ignore his wife's moods, to act as though life hadn't changed, he'd invite friends over for a party, or else he'd try to leave, to head to a club or to see a friend. But one day his wife began upbraiding him with such bile, and continued at it so vehemently every time he neglected a task she set for him, clearly having decided not to cool down until he fell into line—that is, by sitting home like her in gnawing, gloomy dullness—that he really panicked. He realized that married life—at least with his wife—did not necessarily promote pleasantness and decency in a life; in fact it might well amount to an assault on these things, and so fortifications were necessary. Ivan Ilych began assembling means to this end. His professional responsibilities were all he could use to impose his independence on Praskovya Fedorovna, and so Ivan Ilych began to use the duties of his office to fortify a wall protecting his independent world from the jaws of his marriage.

With the birth of the child, various attempts at feeding her, many of which failed, and with illnesses real and imagined of child and mother alike, in which Ivan Ilych's sympathy was demanded but of which he could understand nothing, the need to cordon off for himself a world beyond his family became more urgent still.

As his wife became more irritable and demanding, Ivan Ilych moved his life's center of gravity closer and closer to the office. As he grew to care more about work he became more ambitious than he had ever been.

Very soon, within a year of his marriage, Ivan Ilych realized that married life, though it offered some comforts, was in fact a weighty and complicated affair, and that to fulfill one's duty to it—that is, to lead a proper life approved of by society—one needs a certain kind of attitude, as one does in professional matters.

And so Ivan Ilych devised an attitude toward married life. All he needed from it were home-cooked meals, a wife to manage his house, a bed, and, most importantly, the external appearance of decency as decided by public opinion. Beyond that, he looked for good cheer, and, if he found it, was very grateful; if he immediately met rebuff and vituperation he left for the walled-off world of his office, where life was pleasant.

Ivan Ilych was appreciated as a good bureaucrat and in three years was promoted to Associate Public Prosecutor. His new responsibilities, the importance of them, the ability to bring anyone to trial, put anyone in jail, the publicity his speeches got, and the success Ivan Ilych had in all of this: it all made his job more attractive to him.

More children came. His wife grew even angrier and more querulous, but the posture Ivan Ilych had taken toward domestic life made him almost impervious to querulousness.

After seven years of service in that city Ivan Ilych was transferred to another province as Public Prosecutor. They moved, money got tight, and his wife didn't like the town they had moved to. Admittedly, his salary was higher, but life was more expensive there; beside that

two of his children died, which did nothing to improve family life for Ivan Ilych.

Praskovya Fedorovna blamed her husband for everything that went wrong in their new home. Most conversations between husband and wife—especially if they concerned the children's education—led to matters that threatened to start old fights up again. There were still occasional stirrings of affection, but they didn't last long; they were like islets where the couple might anchor for a while, knowing they'd nonetheless have to set out again on a sea of veiled enmity that was expressed in their alienation from each other. This alienation might have bothered Ivan Ilych had he considered it wrong, but by now he regarded it not only as a healthy state of affairs, but as the goal of all family activities. His aim was to free himself more and more from these unpleasantnesses and to give them a semblance of harmlessness and decency; he accomplished this by spending less and less time with his family, and, when he had to, by strengthening his position through the inclusion of guests. But most important of all was that Ivan Ilych had his work. He concentrated all his worldly attention in his professional life. It absorbed him. The sense of his own authority, the ability to destroy anyone he wanted, his importance, even seen externally, in his swaggering into the courthouse or into meetings with subordinates, his success before superiors and inferiors, and, most of all, the mastery he felt over the cases he dealt with—all this gratified him, and together with the conversations he had with his colleagues, over meals or playing whist, filled his life. So all in all the life of Ivan Ilych was going as he thought it should go—pleasantly and properly.

He lived seven more years like this. His eldest daughter turned sixteen, another child died, and there was one son left, a little schoolboy who was the subject of a struggle. Ivan Ilych wanted him to go to law school, but Praskovya Fedorovna out of spite enrolled him in a high school. Their daughter had been taught at home and had turned out well; the boy wasn't slow either.

So went Ivan Ilych's life for seventeen years of marriage. He was already an established prosecutor who had turned down several possible transfers, holding out for a still more desirable post, when an unexpected and unpleasant circumstance shattered the calm of his life. Ivan Ilych had been expecting an appointment as presiding judge in a university city when suddenly Goppe stole a march on him and got the appointment. Ivan Ilych got grumpy about it, became reproachful, and quarreled with Goppe and his immediate superiors. The relationships iced over and the next time he was skipped over again.

It was 1880, the most trying year of Ivan Ilych's life. It became clear that, on the one hand, his salary did not suffice for his lifestyle, while, on the other, he had been totally forgotten, which, though it seemed to him an immense, brutal injustice, everyone else took for business as usual. Not even his father had felt bound to help him. Everyone, he felt, had abandoned him, thinking his thirty-five hundred ruble salary completely normal, even lucky. He alone knew that with the injustices he had suffered, the eternal nagging of his wife, and the debt he'd been racking up by living beyond his means—he alone knew that his position was far from normal.

To save money that summer he filed for a leave of absence and went with Praskovya Fedorovna to stay with her brother in the country.

In the country with no professional life, Ivan Ilych felt for the first time not just ennui but a deep, intolerable melancholy, an existential boredom that convinced him life was impossible as he had been living it and drastic measures would have to be taken.

After a sleepless night pacing the terrace, he decided to go to Petersburg to secure for himself a transfer to another ministry, and to punish those who hadn't held him in high enough esteem.

Within a day, over the protests of his wife and brother-in-law, he had left for Petersburg.

He was going for one reason: to demand a position salaried at five thousand rubles a year. He did not have in mind any particular ministry, direction, or sort of work. All he needed was a job, a job for five thousand, in administration, in banking, on the railways, in one of the Empress Maria's Institutions, even in customs—but the five thousand rubles was unnegotiable and so was a transfer out of the ministry that had failed to appreciate him.

And this is where Ivan Ilych's trip flowered into a surprising success. In Kursk, an acquaintance of his, F.S. Ilin, sat down beside him in the first-class carriage and described the telegram just received by the governor, to the effect that a change was being made in the ministry: Ivan Semyonovich would be acceding to Pyotr Ivanovich's seat.

The proposed change, aside from its meaning for Russia, had a special meaning for Ivan Ilych. If Pyotr Petrovich was being put forward, so too must be his friend Zakhar Ivanovich, and that augured terrifically for Ivan Ilych: Zakhar Ivanovich was a colleague and friend of his as well.

The news was confirmed in Moscow. And when he arrived in Petersburg, Ivan Ilych sought out Zakhar Ivanovich and secured a promise that he be returned to his old position at the Ministry of Justice.

After a week he sent a telegram to his wife:

*Zakhar in Miller's place. On first report I receive appointment.*



Thanks to this personnel change Ivan Ilych was unexpectedly appointed to a spot in his ministry two ranks above his former colleagues, with a salary of five thousand rubles plus thirty-five hundred for relocation expenses. His animus against his enemies and the ministry shrank and vanished; Ivan Ilych was completely happy.

Ivan Ilych returned to the country in better cheer than he'd been in for some time. Praskovya Fedorovna had also lightened up, and they made a truce. Ivan Ilych recounted how they'd toasted him in Petersburg, how every one of his enemies had been disgraced, how they prostrated themselves now before him, how he was envied for his position, and especially how fiercely well-liked he was in Petersburg.

Praskovya Fedorovna listened attentively and acted convinced, never contradicting anything he said, centering all her plans on life in their new city. And Ivan Ilych was glad to see that these plans were his own, that they were on the same page, and that his life, having stumbled, would regain its customary character of pleasantness and decency.

Ivan Ilych had only come back to the country for a little while. He needed to return to the city to take up his new duties on September 10th and, beside that, needed time to settle in his new place, to move everything over from the province, and there was still much to buy and order; in short, to settle into just the life he had set his mind on, which was almost identical to the one Praskovya Fedorovna had set her heart on.

Now that everything had worked out so happily, with he and his wife agreeing on a goal and, beside that, hardly seeing each other, they were getting along better than they had since their first years of marriage. Ivan Ilych had thought to take his family with him right away, but his wife's sister and brother-in-law, who had suddenly become especially affectionate to his whole family, wouldn't hear of it, and so he set out alone.

Ivan Ilych set out, and the good spirits brought on by his success and marital concord, the one strengthening the other, did not desert him. A charming house turned up, just what husband and wife had been dreaming of. Accommodating, high-ceilinged reception rooms in the old style, a grand study well-placed, rooms for his wife and daughter, a little classroom for his son—the place might as well have been custom-designed for them. Ivan Ilych took care of the decoration himself, chose wallpaper, bought more furniture, especially antiques he felt more *comme il faut*, oversaw the upholstering, and everything grew and grew toward the ideal he had set for himself. With things only half done, his expectations were already being exceeded. He understood how *comme il faut* it would be, how graceful and free of vulgarity when everything was ready. As he drifted off to sleep at night he imagined how the reception room would look. Surveying the yet unfinished drawing room, he could already make out the fireplace, and a screen, an *étagère*, the little chairs scattered around, the dishes and plates on the walls, and the bronzes, all where they'd eventually be. He was pleased to think how it would overwhelm his Pasha and Lizanka, who shared his taste in decoration. They were expecting nothing even close to this. He had had especially good luck finding and getting bargains on antiques, which gave the place an especially aristocratic feel. He wrote letters describing the place as mediocre to build up their surprise. All this kept him so busy that not even his new job, which he had so looked forward to, was much more than a distraction from it. In court he had moments of absentmindedness: what kind of cornices to get for his curtains, straight or curved? He was so preoccupied that he often tinkered around himself rearranging the furniture, rehangng the curtains. Once he had gotten onto a ladder to show

the uncomprehending upholsterer how he wanted the drapes hung, and he had stumbled and nearly fallen, but being a strong and nimble man managed to catch himself and merely knocked his side on a knob on the window frame. The bruise was painful, but it healed quickly—Ivan Ilych felt especially cheerful and healthy for this whole period. He wrote, *I feel that fifteen years have been taken off my head*. He had thought he would finish by September but everything dragged on until mid-October. Still, the results were charming, and not just to him—everyone said so.

In fact it was all exactly what you so often see among people who are not quite rich but want to seem as though they are, and so end up resembling only each other: damasks, ebonized flowers, carpets, and bronzes. Dark and shining—everything that people of a certain class use to resemble other people of the same class. And in his case the resemblance was so strong that the house was nearly impossible to distinguish from any other; but to him it all seemed somehow special. After meeting his family at the rail station he brought them into the polished readiness of the house, where a footman in a white tie opened a door into the flower-lined hallway, and later they went into the drawing room and study, gasping with pleasure. He was very happy, drove them everywhere, got drunk on their praise, and glowed from pleasure. At tea that evening Praskovya Fedorovna asked him, among other things about his fall, and he broke out laughing and acted out the whole scene for them; his sudden flight had terrified the poor upholsterer.

“Good thing I’m so agile. Someone else might’ve been killed, and I just have a little bruise here. It hurts when you touch it, but it’s already healing up. It’s nothing.”

And so they began living in their new home, which they realized, as one always does, after getting good and cozy, was just one room too small; and they grew accustomed to the new salary, which was inadequate by just a little, maybe five hundred rubles; still, life was very good. Things went especially well at first, before the place was completely set up, while work still needed to be done: buy this, order that, rearrange, adjust. Although there were occasional disagreements between husband and wife, both were so happy and had so much going on that everything resolved itself without a serious row. When they ran out of decorations to arrange, things got a little boring and seemed to lack something, but by the acquaintances had already been made and habits set, and life felt complete.

Ivan Ilych would spend his mornings in court and be back for dinner, and at first his mood would be good, although he suffered occasional vicarious indignities on behalf of the household (any spot on a tablecloth or the upholstery, any fray in the tassels of the window-blind drove him crazy: he had put so much work into the décor that any imperfection caused him pain). But in general Ivan Ilych’s life was going just how he thought it should: easily, pleasantly, and properly. He woke up at nine, drank his coffee, read the paper, and then put on his uniform and headed to the court. There he slid right into his usual harness and got to dealing with petitioners, questions for the office, the office itself, court sessions both public and administrative. In all this it was necessary to block out everything that could be felt in the blood, since any vivacity always derails the administrative process; it was imperative to admit no relationship to anybody but an official one, and even then only on official terms. For example, if a man showed up wanting some information from Ivan Ilych, and the information didn’t fall in his bailiwick, then Ivan Ilych would have absolutely nothing to say to him; but if the man did have some official business for him, the kind that can go on official

stationery under a letterhead, Ivan Ilych would behave resolutely, doing everything in his power to help, observing the basic rules of friendly human interaction—which is to say he was courteous. But as soon as the official relationship expired, everything else evaporated too. Ivan Ilych had practiced this skill for keeping his professional life discrete from his actual life for a long time, and had developed it to such a degree that he sometimes, like a virtuoso, would blend his personal and professional attitudes together, as though for fun. He allowed himself to do it because he felt sure he'd be able to disentangle them when he needed to accentuate the official attitude, casting off the human. Ivan Ilych's cases went not just easily, pleasantly, and properly, but in fact virtuosically. Between sessions he smoked, drank tea, and chatted—a little about politics, a little on common topics, a little about cards, but most of all about professional appointments. And tired, but with the feeling of being a virtuoso—maybe a first violin—who has played a perfect concert, he would head home. At home his daughter and wife would have gone somewhere or else someone would be over; his son was in high school and would be preparing for tomorrow's classes with a tutor, poring over whatever it is that high schools teach. Everything was going well. After dinner, if there were no guests, Ivan Ilych would sometimes read whatever book everyone had been talking about, and in the evening sit down to business—that is, read through his files—comparing witnesses' depositions and noting which section of the legal code applied to them. He was neither bored nor enthralled by it. It was always boring when he knew there was a whist game going on somewhere; but when he didn't, it was better than sitting around alone with his wife. Ivan Ilych's chief pleasures were little dinner parties he would throw for men and women of high social standing, and these were as much like other dinner parties as his drawing room was like other drawing rooms.

Once they had even given a dance. And Ivan Ilych had been very happy, and everything had been just right, except that he had a huge argument with his wife over pastries and sweets: Praskovya Fedorovna had made arrangements, but Ivan Ilych had insisted on getting everything from a pricey confectioner and he had bought too many pies, so the bill came to forty-five rubles and they had too many left over. The quarrel was nasty, and Praskovya Fedorovna chastised him: "You fool, you imbecile." He clutched at his head and heart and threatened divorce. But the evening itself had been enjoyable. The finest people were there and Ivan Ilych danced with Princess Trufonova, sister of a woman famous for founding the Bear Ye My Burden Society. Professional pleasure was the pleasure of self-love; social pleasure was the pleasure of vanity; but Ivan Ilych's present pleasure was the pleasure of whist. He openly admitted that, at the end of the day, whatever sadness came to his life, the one pleasure that shone like a candle burning brightly above all else was whist: to sit down with good players, not novices but real partners and opponents, and especially to play four-handed (five-handed is annoying, because you have to sit a round out, though of course everyone pretends they don't mind at all), to have an intelligent, serious game (when the cards allow it), and later to have supper and drink a glass of wine. And after whist, especially after a small winning (a big one is unbecoming), Ivan Ilych would lay down to sleep in an especially good mood.

And so they lived. They moved in the very best social circles, and took visits from important people, and young people on their way up.

In the eyes of their social circle, man, wife, and daughter were in complete agreement and

by an unspoken compact, shook themselves free of the various friends and relatives who streamed fawningly into the drawing room with Japanese dishes on its walls. Soon the sycophants had ceased coming by, and only the very best of society was seen at the Golovin's. Young men came to court Lizanka, and Petrishchev, an examining magistrate and the son and sole heir of Dmitri Ivanovich Petrishchev, began paying her so much attention that Ivan Ilych wondered aloud to Praskovya Fedorovna: "Should we arrange a troika ride for them? Or some kind of performance?" That was how they lived. And everything kept up like that, nothing changing, and it was all going terribly well.

They were all in good health. Ivan Ilych sometimes complained of a funny taste in his mouth or a sort of dull discomfort in the left side of his belly, but you could hardly call it a malady.

Still, over time the discomfort—not quite a pain—began to grow into a strange feeling of pressure in his left side and a general sort of malaise. Ever stronger and stronger, it started to mar the pleasantness of the easy, proper life the Golovin family had settled into. Husband and wife began quarreling ever more constantly, and soon the ease and pleasantness of their lives dissipated, and maintaining proper appearances became a chore. They began making scenes again. The sea was again spotted with islets—and few of them—where husband and wife could get together without exploding at each other.

And Praskovya Federovna, not without justification now, declared her husband's character heavy and difficult. With characteristic exaggeration she even said that he had always been beastly, that surviving twenty years of it had squeezed the resources of her goodness to the last. It was true that he now started their fights. He would always raise his quibbles just before dinner, as he started into his soup. He might find some imperfection in the china, or that the food wasn't done right, his son had his elbows on the table, he didn't like his daughter's hairstyle. And whatever it was, he blamed Praskovya Fedorovna. At first she had objected and volleyed the nastiness right back at him, but once or twice he had raged so furiously at the beginning of dinner that she realized it was some physical derangement brought on by eating, and grew resigned; she stopped objecting, and decided just to rush everyone through meals. By her acquiescence Praskovya Fedorovna did herself great credit. But having decided that her husband had a fierce temper and had made her life unhappy, she began pitying herself—and the more she did, the more she despised her husband. She was at the point of wishing he would die, if never quite sincerely: after all, it would mean the end of his pittance of a salary. This pitted her even more strongly against him. If even his death couldn't save her, she must be experiencing the most dreadful kind of unhappiness; she was irritated but concealed it, and her hidden irritation gave strength to his irritation.

After one scene in which Ivan Ilych had been particularly unjustified, and after which he had said by way of excuse that he was certainly irritable but it was because he did not feel well, she told him that if he was sick he needed treatment, and she demanded that he visit a well-known doctor.

So he went. Everything was just as he had expected; everything was done just as it always is. The doctor's pretentious self-importance was familiar—he had seen the same in himself in court—and the sounding, and listening, the needless questions with obvious answers, and the heavy look that seemed to say, *Listen, just leave it to us, we'll take care of everything—we know precisely how to make the arrangements, it's the same for anybody*. It was exactly the same as in court. This famous doctor cut exactly the same figure to Ivan Ilych that he himself must have cut presiding before the accused.

The doctor said: "This-and-that and such-and-such indicate an et-cetera-and-so-forth inside of you; but if my investigations don't confirm blah-blah-blah and you-get-the-idea, we'll have to assume so on and so forth. And if we assume that ..." and so on. Just one question mattered to Ivan Ilych: was his condition serious, or not? But the doctor ignored this misplaced curiosity. From his point of view, it seemed idle and not up for discussion; his diagnosis was

toss-up between a floating kidney, chronic catarrh, and appendicitis. It wasn't a question of the life or death of Ivan Ilych, but a quarrel between his floating kidney and appendix. And the doctor settled it—brilliantly, it seemed to Ivan Ilych—in favor of the appendix, with the proviso that his urine sample might shed new light on things that would require reconsideration of the case. The doctor accomplished this all with the same brilliance that Ivan Ilych himself had displayed thousands of times for the defendants who had stood before him. It was with just that brilliance that the doctor triumphantly, even exultantly, made his diagnosis, looking down his glasses at the accused. From his summary Ivan Ilych drew the conclusion that things were bad. That is, it was bad for *him*; as for the doctor and everyone else, well, it didn't matter much. The realization hit Ivan Ilych hard, calling forth a great tide of self-pity, and great fury at a doctor who could be indifferent to matters of such importance.

But he did not say anything; he stood up, laid some money on the table, and, after letting out a sigh, spoke:

"I suppose patients like me often put uncomfortable questions to you," he said. "In general, is this a dangerous illness or not?"

The doctor glared at him through his glasses with one eye, as if to say: *If the accused will not confine himself to the questions put to him, I shall be obliged to have you removed from this hall of justice.*

"I have already told you what I consider necessary and expedient," the doctor said. "Further testing will complete my diagnosis." And the doctor bowed.

Ivan Ilych left slowly, climbed disconsolately into his coach, and went home. The whole way he racked his brain over everything the doctor had said, trying to translate all the muddy scientific jargon into simple language and find in it an answer to the question *Is it bad, is it really something very bad, or is it nothing to worry about?* And it seemed to him that the gist of everything the doctor had said was that things were very bad indeed. Everything Ivan Ilych rode past seemed clothed in sadness. The coachmen sad, and the houses, the passersby, the shops also seemed sad. And that ache, that dull, rueful, ache that would not relent for a second seemed, combined with every unclear word the doctor had said, to take on still heavier implications. Ivan Ilych now regarded it closely, with a new feeling of gravity.

When he got home he began telling his wife the story. At first she listened, but in the middle of the report their daughter walked in with a hat on: she was planning on going for a ride with her mother. With an effort she forced herself to sit down and make herself a part of the tedium, but she couldn't be still for long, and so her mother was unable to hear the whole thing.

"Well, I'm very glad," his wife said. "Now listen, just make sure you take your medicine and watch the dosages. Here, give me the prescription, I'll send Gerasim to the pharmacist's. And she went to get dressed.

With her in the room he had barely been able to take a breath, and with her gone he let out a heavy sigh.

"Well, who knows," he said. "Maybe it really is nothing after all."

He started taking his medicine, following the doctor's instructions (which had changed on examination of his urine). But as it happens, some confusion arose, some disparities between the treatment he was supposed to follow and the results he was supposed to expect. The

doctor couldn't be reached, and things weren't turning out as the doctor had told him they would. He must have forgotten, or else lied, or else been hiding something.

But all the same Ivan Ilych followed his instructions exactly, and there was at first some consolation in knowing what to do.

After his visit to the doctor, Ivan Ilych devoted most of his time to following the doctor's orders about hygiene and medicine precisely, and to closely observing his pain and everything that came out of his body. His main interests in life became other people's sickness and other people's health. When people around him would talk about someone who was sick, about someone who had died, about someone who had made a recovery, and especially about an illness like his own, his ears would perk up and, trying to hide his agitation, he would ask numerous questions and apply the answers to himself.

The pain did not let up, but Ivan Ilych tried to convince himself he was feeling better. And he could fool himself, if there was nothing making him edgy. But as soon as he had a spat with his wife, or a bad day at work, lousy luck at whist, anything, he would immediately feel the full force of his ailment; in the past he had dealt with these setbacks: *I'll make up for it, I'll prevail, wait this out, get a grand slam*. Now the slightest misfortune overcame him and plunged him into despair. He would tell himself, *Here I've just begun my recovery, the medicine finally kicking in, and now all these damned setbacks, this lousy luck ...* And he cursed the events and the people who had made trouble for him and were killing him, and he felt that his rage might be killing him too; but he couldn't help it. It would seem—one would think—that he should have realized that the fulminations he poured on the circumstances and people in his life were making his condition worse, and that for this reason he should pay less attention to all the negative things that happened. But he explained it to himself in just the opposite way: telling himself that what he needed was peace and quiet, he went after everything that shattered that peace, and that quiet, and at even the tiniest irritation he became enraged. His condition was worsened by everything he read in medical books and all the advice he got from doctors. He was getting worse so gradually that he could trick himself, comparing one day with another—there was never much change from day to day. But when he consulted with doctors it seemed to him that he was going downhill fast. Despite that, he consulted with doctors constantly.

This month he had visited another famous one, and this one told him almost exactly what the first one had, but put the questions differently. And consulting with this eminence of the medical establishment only aggravated Ivan Ilych's doubts and fears. A friend of a friend of his—a very good doctor—diagnosed him with a totally different illness and even though he promised he would recover, his questions and assumptions confused Ivan Ilych even more deeply and made his doubts worse. Another doctor—a homeopath—offered yet another diagnosis and gave him a new prescription, which Ivan Ilych, concealing it from everyone, took for a week. But after a week, feeling no better, he had lost trust in all the medication he was taking, and fell into an even deeper despondency. One time a lady of his acquaintance told him about the healing power of icons. Ivan Ilych found himself listening closely to her and even toying with the idea that this might make sense. But then he became alarmed at himself. *Have I really gone so soft?* he asked himself. *What mumbo-jumbo! It's all nonsense, can't give in to superstition. Having chosen a doctor, I should follow his treatment. So that's what I'll do. It ends now. I won't think about it, I'll keep strictly to the doctor's treatment plan until summer*

*And then it'll be clear. For now I've got to stop wavering!* It was easy to say, but impossible to follow through with. The pain in his side tormented him constantly, even seemed to be getting worse, becoming incessant, while the taste in his mouth got constantly stranger. His breath seemed to have taken on a revolting smell, and he lost his appetite and became very feeble. He couldn't fool himself: something terrifying, new, and more significant than anything else that had ever happened in his life was happening within him. And only he himself understood it, the world neither could nor wanted to, and everyone behaved as if everything was exactly as it had been before. That tormented Ivan Ilych worst of all. Even at home, he saw that his wife and daughter, their social lives in full swing, understood nothing and were annoyed that he was so gloomy and demanding, as though it were his fault. Although they tried to hide it, he saw he was an albatross to them, and that his wife had come up with a special policy for dealing with his illness no matter what he said or did. It went like this:

"You know," she told her friends, "Ivan Ilych cannot follow his doctor's orders strictly like a normal person. One day he'll take his drops, stick to his diet, get to bed at a decent hour, and then suddenly, the next, if I'm not paying attention, he forgets his drops, eats sturgeon even though the doctor forbids it, and sits around playing whist till one in the morning."

"Oh, come on, when was that?" Ivan Ilych said with annoyance. "Maybe once, at Pyotr Ivanovich's."

"And yesterday with Shebek."

"It didn't make any difference—I was in too much pain to sleep."

"Oh, whatever the reason is, that way you'll never get better and just go on torturing us."

In short, Praskovya Fedorovna's policy toward the illness of her husband, which she elaborated to him as well as to anyone else who would listen, was that it was all Ivan Ilych's fault, just one more stone he was piling atop his wife. Ivan Ilych had the feeling this escaped her lips involuntarily, but that made it no easier for him to hear.

In court Ivan Ilych began noticing—or thought he'd noticed—the same strange attitude toward him: people seemed to be keeping a close eye on him, as though his position might soon be vacated. Then his friends started teasing him gently for his suspicions, as though the horrible and terrifying thing that was happening inexplicably inside him without warning, eating unendingly at him and irresistibly dragging him off, were the funniest thing in the world. Shvarts especially upset him, with the playfulness, vitality, and *comme il faut* demeanor that reminded Ivan Ilych of himself ten years younger.

Friends came over to play cards, sat down around the table. They dealt, bending the new cards to break them in, he sorted the diamonds in his hand; he held seven. His partner said *No trumps* and supported him with two diamonds. What more could he want? It should have been lively, good fun—they had a grand slam. But suddenly Ivan Ilych felt that gnawing pain in the taste in his mouth, and it seemed savage to be so happy about a grand slam in whist.

He looks at his partner Mikhail Mikhailovich, who is tapping on the table with a sanguine hand, and politely, indulgently, pushing the tricks to Ivan Ilych rather than grab them himself, as though to give him the pleasure of collecting them while sparing him the trouble of stretching his arm out. *What does he think, that I'm so weak I can't reach out that far?* Ivan Ilych thinks and, forgetting what he is doing he trumps his own partner, missing the grand slam by three tricks. And it is awful to see how upset Mikhail Mikhailovich is, while he



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