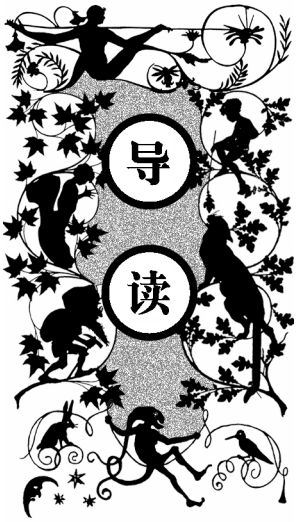
第三章

Chapter 3



一位身材高大、约莫三十五岁左右的男人走了进来，他有一张富有表情的脸和深蓝色的眼睛。他向达尔娅略一鞠躬，告诉她自己感到很荣幸能来到她家。

“请坐……我也很高兴，”达尔娅喃喃道，将罗亭介绍给其他人，然后询问他是否在政府机关工作。

“不，我已经退职了。”罗亭回答说。

经过一阵短时间的静默，大家重新交谈起来。毕加索夫将矛头指向男爵的论文，声称这些所谓的理论、体系都是毫无意义的，但这引起了罗亭的辩论兴趣。很快，大家发现，这位新来的客人并不是一个傻子。

罗亭一开始似乎并不敢说太多，但是渐渐地，他的神情变得热烈了，口齿也更加伶俐了，显示出过人的才华和能力。一刻钟后，客厅里只能听到他的声音了。谁都没想到他是这么了不起的人物，因为他的衣服如此破旧，也毫无名声，可是一转眼，他就把所有人都迷住了——就连娜泰雅的脸上也浮现出一阵红晕，闪闪发亮的眼睛目不转睛地望着他。

这时，罗亭来到娜泰雅的身边，他落落大方地问：“您会弹钢琴吗？”

“是的，但是不太好，”娜泰雅有些迷惘地站起身，坐在旁边的服令萨夫也站了起来，“康迪坦丁弹得更好。”

康斯坦丁立刻带着假笑迎上前来，开始弹钢琴，而娜泰雅就站在他身

旁。罗亭静静地听着乐曲，深蓝的眼睛不时移到娜泰雅的身上。过了一会儿，罗亭又跑到了敞开的窗前，凝视着花园里温柔的夜色，说："这音乐和夜，让我想起在德国的求学生涯，我们的歌。"

"你曾经在德国吗？"达尔娅问。

"是的，"罗亭说。他开始讲起自己的大学生活，娓娓叙来，言谈间充满着独特的魅力。他说话的声音热烈而柔和，带着幻想的成分，仿佛有什么力量在唇边流淌着，就这样一直从过去谈到未来，谈到流逝人生的永恒意义。

"你是一个诗人。"达尔娅轻声说，其他人也暗自同意——除了毕加索夫。

一点半后，大家都散了，达尔娅留罗亭在家里过夜。巴芙罗夫纳在和她的兄弟回家的途中，盛赞罗亭惊人的敏锐力。服令萨夫也表示同意，但是他神情沮丧，似乎比平常更忧郁。

康斯坦丁回到了卧室，一边大声说："多么伶俐的小伙子！"一边瞪了一眼仆人，吩咐他走出房间。巴西斯塔夫整夜都没有睡觉，给他在莫斯科的朋友写信；至于娜泰雅，她也失眠了一晚上，目光深深地望着黑暗处，感到血脉里有什么在狂热地跳动着。

A man of about thirty-five entered, of a tall, somewhat stooping figure, with crisp curly hair and swarthy complexion, an irregular but expressive and intelligent face, a liquid brilliance in his quick, dark blue eyes, a straight, broad nose, and well-curved lips. His clothes were not new, and were somewhat small, as though he had outgrown them.

He walked quickly up to Darya Mihailovna, and with a slight bow told her that he had long wished to have the honour of an introduction to her, and that his friend the baron greatly regretted that he could not take leave of her in person.

The thin sound of Rudin's voice seemed out of keeping with his tall figure and broad chest.

'Pray be seated... very delighted,' murmured Darya Mihailovna, and, after

introducing him to the rest of the company, she asked him whether he belonged to those parts or was a visitor.

'My estate is in the T— province,' replied Rudin, holding his hat on his knees. 'I have not been here long. I came on business and stayed for a while in your district town.'

'With whom?'

'With the doctor. He was an old chum of mine at the university.'

'Ah! the doctor. He is highly spoken of. He is skilful in his work, they say. But have you known the baron long?'

'I met him last winter in Moscow, and I have just been spending about a week with him.'

'He is a very clever man, the baron.'

'Yes.'

Darya Mihailovna sniffed at her little crushed-up handkerchief steeped in eau de cologne.

'Are you in the government service?' she asked.

'Who? I?'

'Yes.'

'No. I have retired.'

There followed a brief pause. The general conversation was resumed.

'If you will allow me to be inquisitive,' began Pigasov, turning to Rudin, 'do you know the contents of the essay which his excellency the baron has sent?'

'Yes, I do.'

'This essay deals with the relations to commerce—or no, of manufactures to commerce in our country.... That was your expression, I think, Darya Mihailovna?'

'Yes, it deals with'... began Darya Mihailovna, pressing her hand to her forehead.

'I am, of course, a poor judge of such matters,' continued Pigasov, 'but I must confess that to me even the title of the essay seems excessively (how

could I put it delicately?) excessively obscure and complicated.'

'Why does it seem so to you?'

Pigasov smiled and looked across at Darya Mihailovna.

'Why, is it clear to you?' he said, turning his foxy face again towards Rudin.

'To me? Yes.'

'H'm. No doubt you must know better.'

'Does your head ache?' Alexandra Pavlovna inquired of Darya Mihailovna.

'No. It is only my—c'est nerveux.'

'Allow me to inquire,' Pigasov was beginning again in his nasal tones, 'your friend, his excellency Baron Muffel—I think that's his name?'

'Precisely.'

'Does his excellency Baron Muffel make a special study of political economy, or does he only devote to that interesting subject the hours of leisure left over from his social amusements and his official duties?'

Rudin looked steadily at Pigasov.

'The baron is an amateur on this subject,' he replied, growing rather red, 'but in his essay there is much that is interesting and just.'

'I am not able to dispute it with you; I have not read the essay. But I venture to ask—the work of your friend Baron Muffel is no doubt founded more upon general propositions than upon facts?'

'It contains both facts and propositions founded upon the facts.'

'Yes, yes. I must tell you that, in my opinion—and I've a right to give my opinion, on occasion; I spent three years at Dorpat... all these, so-called general propositions, hypotheses, these systems—excuse me, I am a provincial, I speak the truth bluntly—are absolutely worthless. All that's only theorising—only good for misleading people. Give us facts, sir, and that's enough!'

'Really!' retorted Rudin, 'why, but ought not one to give the significance of the facts?'

'General propositions,' continued Pigasov, 'they're my abomination, these

general propositions, theories, conclusions. All that's based on so-called convictions; every one is talking about his convictions, and attaches importance to them, prides himself on them. Ah!'

And Pigasov shook his fist in the air. Pandalevsky laughed.

'Capital!' put in Rudin, 'it follows that there is no such thing as conviction according to you?'

'No, it doesn't exist.'

'Is that your conviction?'

'Yes.'

'How do you say that there are none then? Here you have one at the very first turn.'

All in the room smiled and looked at one another.

'One minute, one minute, but—,' Pigasov was beginning.

But Darya Mihailovna clapped her hands crying, 'Bravo, bravo, Pigasov's beaten!' and she gently took Rudin's hat from his hand.

'Defer your delight a little, madam; there's plenty of time!' Pigasov began with annoyance. 'It's not sufficient to say a witty word, with a show of superiority; you must prove, refute. We had wandered from the subject of our discussion.'

'With your permission,' remarked Rudin, coolly, 'the matter is very simple. You do not believe in the value of general propositions—you do not believe in convictions?'

'I don't believe in them, I don't believe in anything!'

'Very good. You are a sceptic.'

'I see no necessity for using such a learned word. However—'

'Don't interrupt!' interposed Darya Mihailovna.

'At him, good dog!' Pandalevsky said to himself at the same instant, and smiled all over.

'That word expresses my meaning,' pursued Rudin. 'You understand it; why not make use of it? You don't believe in anything. Why do you believe in facts?'

‘Why? That’s good! Facts are matters of experience, every one knows what facts are. I judge of them by experience, by my own senses.’

‘But may not your senses deceive you? Your senses tell you that the sun goes round the earth,... but perhaps you don’t agree with Copernicus? You don’t even believe in him?’

Again a smile passed over every one’s face, and all eyes were fastened on Rudin. ‘He’s by no means a fool,’ every one was thinking.

‘You are pleased to keep on joking,’ said Pigasov. ‘Of course that’s very original, but it’s not to the point.’

‘In what I have said hitherto,’ rejoined Rudin, ‘there is, unfortunately, too little that’s original. All that has been well known a very long time, and has been said a thousand times. That is not the pith of the matter.’

‘What is then?’ asked Pigasov, not without insolence.

In discussions he always first bantered his opponent, then grew cross, and finally sulked and was silent.

‘Here it is,’ continued Rudin. ‘I cannot help, I own, feeling sincere regret when I hear sensible people attack—’

‘Systems?’ interposed Pigasov.

‘Yes, with your leave, even systems. What frightens you so much in that word? Every system is founded on a knowledge of fundamental laws, the principles of life—’

‘But there is no knowing them, no discovering them.’

‘One minute. Doubtless they are not easy for every one to get at, and to make mistakes is natural to man. However, you will certainly agree with me that Newton, for example, discovered some at least of these fundamental laws? He was a genius, we grant you; but the grandeur of the discoveries of genius is that they become the heritage of all. The effort to discover universal principles in the multiplicity of phenomena is one of the radical characteristics of human thought, and all our civilisation—’

‘That’s what you’re driving at!’ Pigasov broke in in a drawling tone. ‘I am a practical man and all these metaphysical subtleties I don’t enter into and don’t

want to enter into.'

'Very good! That's as you prefer. But take note that your very desire to be exclusively a practical man is itself your sort of system—your theory.'

'Civilisation you talk about!' blurted in Pigasov; 'that's another admirable notion of yours! Much use in it, this vaunted civilisation! I would not give a brass farthing for your civilisation!'

'But what a poor sort of argument, African Semenitch!' observed Darya Mihailovna, inwardly much pleased by the calmness and perfect good-breeding of her new acquaintance. 'Cest un homme comme il faut,' she thought, looking with well-disposed scrutiny at Rudin; 'we must be nice to him!' Those last words she mentally pronounced in Russian.

'I will not champion civilisation,' continued Rudin after a short pause, 'it does not need my championship. You don't like it, every one to his own taste. Besides, that would take us too far. Allow me only to remind you of the old saying, "Jupiter, you are angry; therefore you are in the wrong." I meant to say that all those onslaughts upon systems—general propositions—are especially distressing, because together with these systems men repudiate knowledge in general, and all science and faith in it, and consequently also faith in themselves, in their own powers. But this faith is essential to men; they cannot exist by their sensations alone they are wrong to fear ideas and not to trust in them. Scepticism is always characterised by barrenness and impotence.'

'That's all words!' muttered Pigasov.

'Perhaps so. But allow me to point out to you that when we say "that's all words!" we often wish ourselves to avoid the necessity of saying anything more substantial than mere words.'

'What?' said Pigasov, winking his eyes.

'You understood what I meant,' retorted Rudin, with involuntary, but instantly repressed impatience. 'I repeat, if man has no steady principle in which he trusts, no ground on which he can take a firm stand, how can he form a just estimate of the needs, the tendencies and the future of his country? How can he know what he ought to do, if—'

‘I leave you the field,’ ejaculated Pigasov abruptly, and with a bow he turned away without looking at any one.

Rudin stared at him, and smiled slightly, saying nothing.

‘Aha! he has taken to flight!’ said Darya Mihailovna. ‘Never mind, Dmitri...! I beg your pardon,’ she added with a cordial smile, ‘what is your paternal name?’

‘Nikolaitch.’

‘Never mind, my dear Dmitri Nikolaitch, he did not deceive any of us. He wants to make a show of not wishing to argue any more. He is conscious that he cannot argue with you. But you had better sit nearer to us and let us have a little talk.’

Rudin moved his chair up.

‘How is it we have not met till now?’ was Darya Mihailovna’s question. ‘That is what surprises me. Have you read this book? C’est de Tocqueville, vous savez?’

And Darya Mihailovna held out the French pamphlet to Rudin.

Rudin took the thin volume in his hand, turned over a few pages of it, and laying it down on the table, replied that he had not read that particular work of M. de Tocqueville, but that he had often reflected on the question treated by him. A conversation began to spring up. Rudin seemed uncertain at first, and not disposed to speak out freely; his words did not come readily, but at last he grew warm and began to speak. In a quarter of an hour his voice was the only sound in the room, All were crowding in a circle round him.

Only Pigasov remained aloof, in a corner by the fireplace. Rudin spoke with intelligence, with fire and with judgment; he showed much learning, wide reading. No one had expected to find in him a remarkable man. His clothes were so shabby, so little was known of him. Every one felt it strange and incomprehensible that such a clever man should have suddenly made his appearance in the country. He seemed all the more wonderful and, one may even say, fascinating to all of them, beginning with Darya Mihailovna. She was pluming herself on having discovered him, and already at this early date was

dreaming of how she would introduce Rudin into the world. In her quickness to receive impressions there was much that was almost childish, in spite of her years. Alexandra Pavlovna, to tell the truth, understood little of all that Rudin said, but was full of wonder and delight; her brother too was admiring him. Pandalevsky was watching Darya Mihailovna and was filled with envy. Pigasov thought, 'If I have to give five hundred roubles I will get a nightingale to sing better than that!' But the most impressed of all the party were Bassistoff and Natalya. Scarcely a breath escaped Bassistoff; he sat the whole time with open mouth and round eyes and listened—listened as he had never listened to any one in his life—while Natalya's face was suffused by a crimson flush, and her eyes, fastened unwaveringly on Rudin, were both dimmed and shining.

'What splendid eyes he has!' Volintsev whispered to her.

'Yes, they are.'

'It's only a pity his hands are so big and red.'

Natalya made no reply.

Tea was brought in. The conversation became more general, but still by the sudden unanimity with which every one was silent, directly Rudin opened his mouth, one could judge of the strength of the impression he had produced. Darya Mihailovna suddenly felt inclined to tease Pigasov. She went up to him and said in an undertone, 'Why don't you speak instead of doing nothing but smile sarcastically? Make an effort, challenge him again,' and without waiting for him to answer, she beckoned to Rudin.

'There's one thing more you don't know about him,' she said to him, with a gesture towards Pigasov,—'he is a terrible hater of women, he is always attacking them; pray, show him the true path.'

Rudin involuntarily looked down upon Pigasov; he was a head and shoulders taller. Pigasov almost withered up with fury, and his sour face grew pale.

'Darya Mihailovna is mistaken,' he said in an unsteady voice, 'I do not only attack women; I am not a great admirer of the whole human species.'

'What can have given you such a poor opinion of them?' inquired Rudin.

Pigasov looked him straight in the face.

'The study of my own heart, no doubt, in which I find every day more and more that is base. I judge of others by myself. Possibly this too is erroneous, and I am far worse than others, but what am I to do? it's a habit!'

'I understand you and sympathise with you!' was Rudin's rejoinder. 'What generous soul has not experienced a yearning for self-humiliation? But one ought not to remain in that condition from which there is no outlet beyond.'

'I am deeply indebted for the certificate of generosity you confer on my soul,' retorted Pigasov. 'As for my condition, there's not much amiss with it, so that even if there were an outlet from it, it might go to the deuce, I shouldn't look for it!'

'But that means—pardon the expression—to prefer the gratification of your own pride to the desire to be and live in the truth.'

'Undoubtedly,' cried Pigasov, 'pride—that I understand, and you, I expect, understand, and every one understands; but truth, what is truth? Where is it, this truth?'

'You are repeating yourself, let me warn you,' remarked Darya Mihailovna.

Pigasov shrugged his shoulders.

'Well, where's the harm if I do? I ask: where is truth? Even the philosophers don't know what it is. Kant says it is one thing; but Hegel—no, you're wrong, it's something else.'

'And do you know what Hegel says of it?' asked Rudin, without raising his voice.

'I repeat,' continued Pigasov, flying into a passion, 'that I cannot understand what truth means. According to my idea, it doesn't exist at all in the world, that is to say, the word exists but not the thing itself.'

'Fie, fie!' cried Darya Mihailovna, 'I wonder you're not ashamed to say so, you old sinner! No truth? What is there to live for in the world after that?'

'Well, I go so far as to think, Darya Mihailovna,' retorted Pigasov, in a tone of annoyance, 'that it would be much easier for you, in any case, to live

without truth than without your cook, Stepan, who is such a master hand at soups! And what do you want with truth, kindly tell me? you can't trim a bonnet with it!'

'A joke is not an argument,' observed Darya Mihailovna, 'especially when you descend to personal insult.'

'I don't know about truth, but I see speaking it does not answer,' muttered Pigasov, and he turned angrily away.

And Rudin began to speak of pride, and he spoke well. He showed that man without pride is worthless, that pride is the lever by which the earth can be moved from its foundations, but that at the same time he alone deserves the name of man who knows how to control his pride, as the rider does his horse, who offers up his own personality as a sacrifice to the general good.

'Egoism,' so he ended, 'is suicide. The egoist withers like a solitary barren tree; but pride, ambition, as the active effort after perfection, is the source of all that is great.... Yes! a man must prune away the stubborn egoism of his personality to give it the right of self-expression.'

'Can you lend me a pencil?' Pigasov asked Bassistoff.

Bassistoff did not at once understand what Pigasov had asked him.

'What do you want a pencil for?' he said at last

'I want to write down Mr. Rudin's last sentence. If one doesn't write it down, one might forget it, I'm afraid! But you will own, a sentence like that is such a handful of trumps.'

'There are things which it is a shame to laugh at and make fun of, African Semenitch!' said Bassistoff warmly, turning away from Pigasov.

Meanwhile Rudin had approached Natalya. She got up; her face expressed her confusion. Volintsev, who was sitting near her, got up too.

'I see a piano,' began Rudin, with the gentle courtesy of a travelling prince; 'don't you play on it?'

'Yes, I play,' replied Natalya, 'but not very well. Here is Konstantin Diomiditch plays much better than I do.'

Pandalevsky put himself forward with a simper. 'You should not say that,

Natalya Alexyevna; your playing is not at all inferior to mine.'

'Do you know Schubert's "Erlkonig"?' asked Rudin.

'He knows it, he knows it!' interposed Darya Mihailovna. 'Sit down, Konstantin. You are fond of music, Dmitri Nikolaitch?'

Rudin only made a slight motion of the head and ran his hand through his hair, as though disposing himself to listen. Pandalevsky began to play.

Natalya was standing near the piano, directly facing Rudin. At the first sound his face was transfigured. His dark blue eyes moved slowly about, from time to time resting upon Natalya. Pandalevsky finished playing.

Rudin said nothing and walked up to the open window. A fragrant mist lay like a soft shroud over the garden; a drowsy scent breathed from the trees near. The stars shed a mild radiance. The summer night was soft—and softened all. Rudin gazed into the dark garden, and looked round.

'That music and this night,' he began, 'reminded me of my student days in Germany; our meetings, our serenades.'

'You have been in Germany then?' said Darya Mihailovna.

'I spent a year at Heidelberg, and nearly a year at Berlin.'

'And did you dress as a student? They say they wear a special dress there.'

'At Heidelberg I wore high boots with spurs, and a hussar's jacket with braid on it, and I let my hair grow to my shoulders. In Berlin the students dress like everybody else.'

'Tell us something of your student life,' said Alexandra Pavlovna.

Rudin complied. He was not altogether successful in narrative. There was a lack of colour in his descriptions. He did not know how to be humorous. However, from relating his own adventures abroad, Rudin soon passed to general themes, the special value of education and science, universities, and university life generally. He sketched in a large and comprehensive picture in broad and striking lines. All listened to him with profound attention. His eloquence was masterly and attractive, not altogether clear, but even this want of clearness added a special charm to his words.

The exuberance of his thought hindered Rudin from expressing himself

definitely and exactly. Images followed upon images; comparisons started up one after another—now startlingly bold, now strikingly true. It was not the complacent effort of the practised speaker, but the very breath of inspiration that was felt in his impatient improvising. He did not seek out his words; they came obediently and spontaneously to his lips, and each word seemed to flow straight from his soul, and was burning with all the fire of conviction. Rudin was the master of almost the greatest secret—the music of eloquence. He knew how in striking one chord of the heart to set all the others vaguely quivering and resounding. Many of his listeners, perhaps, did not understand very precisely what his eloquence was about; but their bosoms heaved, it seemed as though veils were lifted before their eyes, something radiant, glorious, seemed shimmering in the distance.

All Rudin's thoughts seemed centred on the future; this lent him something of the impetuous dash of youth... Standing at the window, not looking at any one in special, he spoke, and inspired by the general sympathy and attention, the presence of young women, the beauty of the night, carried along by the tide of his own emotions, he rose to the height of eloquence, of poetry.... The very sound of his voice, intense and soft, increased the fascination; it seemed as though some higher power were speaking through his lips, startling even to himself.... Rudin spoke of what lends eternal significance to the fleeting life of man.

'I remember a Scandinavian legend,' thus he concluded, 'a king is sitting with his warriors round the fire in a long dark barn. It was night and winter. Suddenly a little bird flew in at the open door and flew out again at the other. The king spoke and said that this bird is like man in the world; it flew in from darkness and out again into darkness, and was not long in the warmth and light.... "King," replies the oldest of the warriors, "even in the dark the bird is not lost, but finds her nest." Even so our life is short and worthless; but all that is great is accomplished through men. The consciousness of being the instrument of these higher powers ought to outweigh all other joys for man; even in death he finds his life, his nest.'

Rudin stopped and dropped his eyes with a smile of involuntary embarrassment.

'Vous etes un poete,' was Darya Mihailovna's comment in an undertone. And all were inwardly agreeing with her—all except Pigasov. Without waiting for the end of Rudin's long speech, he quietly took his hat and as he went out whispered viciously to Pandalevsky who was standing near the door:

'No! Fools are more to my taste.'

No one, however, tried to detain him or even noticed his absence.

The servants brought in supper, and half an hour later, all had taken leave and separated. Darya Mihailovna begged Rudin to remain the night. Alexandra Pavlovna, as she went home in the carriage with her brother, several times fell to exclaiming and marvelling at the extraordinary cleverness of Rudin. Volintsev agreed with her, though he observed that he sometimes expressed himself somewhat obscurely—that is to say, not altogether intelligibly, he added,—wishing, no doubt, to make his own thought clear, but his face was gloomy, and his eyes, fixed on a corner of the carriage, seemed even more melancholy than usual.

Pandalevsky went to bed, and as he took off his daintily embroidered braces, he said aloud 'A very smart fellow!' and suddenly, looking harshly at his page, ordered him out of the room. Bassistoff did not sleep the whole night and did not undress—he was writing till morning a letter to a comrade of his in Moscow; and Natalya, too, though she undressed and lay down in her bed, had not an instant's sleep and never closed her eyes. With her head propped on her arm, she gazed fixedly into the darkness; her veins were throbbing feverishly and her bosom often heaved with a deep sigh.