



REINHARD PLUNDERED THE PAYMASTER'S bullet-riddled car with a soldier's cool indifference. The last stragglers had long since disappeared into the various streets spread out fanlike from the square, and there was no sound or sight of the enemy. The park, ripped and torn by shells, brooded in desolate silence, and the facades of the buildings gaped like an eerily empty stage. Here and there curtains fluttered wildly, almost longingly, from the windows; you could almost hear the frightened breath of people hiding in the cellars, not daring to trust the uncanny stillness in the aftermath of the roar of the attack. The semicircle of the square that adjoined the park—the central portion of the fan from which streets radiated like slender, elegant spokes—was strewn with steel helmets, gas masks, and broken rifles. A bright, smiling heaven arched auspiciously above the incomparably beautiful city, whose brilliance and loveliness beckoned from each of its countless windows. And between scraps of military equipment on the soft, saturated, deep green stretches of grass furrowed with trenches lay corpses, corpses in gray uniforms. It was like a lull in a revolution where the center of action had shifted to some other part of the city, drawing all life along with it. And while the corpses on the meadow clasped the earth as if frozen in eternal lament, the trees that lined the avenue trembled beneath the lighthearted caresses of the soft summer breeze.

Reinhard had slung his weapon and his gear beside the disabled vehicle and was rummaging through a jumble of cardboard boxes, discovering delicacies he had not seen in the long, long years of war. Marvelous cigars and soaps whose mere fragrance could have spelled peace, chocolates and biscuits, the finest linens. With startling rapidity he pulled off his filthy, sweat-soaked shirt and felt the pleasure of a new silk one against his body. He then stuffed his pockets systematically, cramming in as much as he could, intoxicated with happiness, digging through the riches at random, sensing with wild delight that the war, which had seemed so cruel and endless, was beginning to unravel. It was inevitably dissolving, dispersing like a gray, persistent pall of cloud scattered by golden flicks of the sun's lash; the war was unraveling. It seemed to Reinhard as if a huge steel cover screwed down airtight over him had suddenly lifted, releasing him into light and air, and he breathed deeply with a wild, powerful sense of freedom. He drew on his magnificent cigar with a smile, released a blue cloud of smoke into the splendid air, and thought of his wife. Soon he would see her again, soon life would begin, and with a laugh he tossed a couple of packs of cigarettes back in the car to make room for a few bars of expensive soap, fit for a princess, for his sweet love. Then he bent to pick up his sword belt and fasten it around his stuffed and swollen waist. But the next moment he lay flattened against the hot, smelly asphalt, breathing heavily.

From a small grove across the park came a whole column of diminutive, fast-moving cars with soldiers in khaki uniforms, careening madly in a broad front, firing blindly as they approached the square. The last remnant of stillness disappeared as a bullet shattered the car's windshield above him. Gripped

suddenly by fear, he was unable to take a calm look to his rear; his confused eyes saw only the merciless smooth surface of the square, across which no flight was possible. The small khaki cars had reached the avenue, gathering on the semicircular square like a pack of small, agile, barking dogs, then dispersing into the streets. One of them passed within a hair's breadth of Reinhard's head, but he had long since assumed the crumpled position he had so often seen among the dead, warding off and embracing in a single gesture. The contented growl of well-maintained tanks approached from the park, and now, risking a quick glance past the flat tire, he saw the advancing columns of infantry and knew it was time to act. The war machine was descending upon him like a cruel curtain and somewhere far beyond it, where the streets opened outward like canyons of deliverance, was the small, beloved face of his wife.

He rose to his knees, concealed behind the bullet-riddled car, and raced toward the nearest street with the improbable, almost grotesque, speed of a madman. But he had failed to notice one of the tanks, followed by a troop of infantry, which had advanced to that very street. He was startled out of the mindless panic of his blind flight by the horrid flutter of a tank shell, winging its way past his head like some terrible bird and exploding against a building with an appalling blast. He threw himself to the ground and crawled on, crazed with fear, while more shells whistled past him like the blows of an enraged man, punching the air. Again and again the rapid flutter above his head, then the detonation, reverberating in the street as if it were a living room. The twelve meters to the street seemed a murderous eternity between life and death. He jumped up and ran, ran toward the street as if into the open arms of life, flut-

tering curtains, open windows, and the defaced facades of buildings accompanying him as in a dream. The seconds were monstrous waves of fear through which he struggled to make his way. He looked around and saw the barrel of the khaki monster rounding the corner like a silently threatening snout; the soldiers accompanying it, moving soundlessly, struck him as especially cruel as they occupied the nearby doorways, calling out in their nasal language for him to surrender. The next bullet whizzed past his shoulder, so close that he could feel the cold ripple of air, and struck a large store window, which shattered in bright and terrible laughter. Then he was on the ground again, crawling, twisting, changing direction like a wild animal, enveloped by the almost sweet song of the infantry's bullets and the ghastly flutter of bursting tank shells. He reached the edge of the street, sweating, filthy, and totally exhausted. The hideous khaki monster rumbled nearer as soldiers rushed from door to door. Cries and stench, noise, noise. Just as he was about to throw himself with full force against the door of a house, a shot flashed from a basement window directly across the way, grazing his arm, ricocheting off the wall, and angling into infinity with a threatening hum. He lurched in despair, near to surrender, heading up the street again, her dear, small beloved face constantly before him. Suddenly, to the right, a small side street. He threw himself into it as into an abyss, cried out, and the small face grew larger and smiled as, blind with exhaustion, almost feeling his way in spite of the bright, smiling sky, he leaned his shoulder against the first door he came to and it opened easily. He found the bolt to lock it as if he'd known the house for years, then stood silently, leaning against the door, holding his breath, listening. Scarcely a minute had

passed since he had leapt from behind the bullet-riddled car to race mindlessly toward the face of his beloved.

He was pale with panic, trembling all over as if he were cold; he heard the tanks rolling closer, several of them, heard shouts from the cellars as the soldiers called back and forth in their crude, chewed-up language, he even thought he could hear the silent fall of their doom-laden rubber soles, but he seemed nailed to the spot by fear, while the street outside seemed to awaken, as if his presence alone had held it in check.

A soft cry of shock, the sort that slips out in moments of greatest danger, released him from paralysis. Startled, he turned and saw a slim, dark-haired young woman in the long, dimly lit hall, her hands stretched forward to ward him off, as delicate and unreal as a fairy tale, dressed in flowing pink.

In the blurred dusk of the hall her hands, face, and dress appeared as an almost flat surface, only the dark ink-spot of her hair stood living and solid in the gray mesh of the air. The frightened gestures relaxed, she approached slowly, and her face emerged, palpable and young, still nervous, in the light passing through the milky glass of the door. Reinhard made an urgent gesture of silence, filled with such need that she instinctively softened her steps. He listened to the sounds outside, tense and alert, as if his fate were to be wrested from that profusion of noise. His eyes searched the charming face of the young woman, and he saw in the human goodness of her gaze that she had no wish to drive him back to ruin.

He quickly surveyed the whole of her face, as if seeking confirmation, the small, delicate mouth, still drawn slightly downward by fear, the sweet, childlike forehead, the fine nose and the sturdy chin, framed and compressed into a small white

plane by the raven-black hair. Then he turned his eyes aside, as if trying to see right through the milk glass, and whispered hoarsely, to her astonishment in fluent French: "If you want to help me, find me some clothes." At first she didn't seem to understand, and gazed at him in surprise, then slipped hurriedly back down the hall. He squeezed his hands together, trying to control his violent trembling as he heard them pounding at nearby doors. He worked a cigarette from his pocket with trembling hands, then started in fear at the sound of the flaring match; the silence with which the woman returned along the hall, quickly and quietly, seemed to him a precious caress. He grabbed the bundle she held out to him, walked rapidly into the darkness of the hall, and began changing as quickly as he could. It seemed an act of providence that he already had on the soft white silk shirt, for she had evidently forgotten any linen.

Now rifle butts were pounding at the door, hard and impatient, and he trembled as he remembered how weak the bolt was. But then he heard the woman's voice, and as he heard it, gentle and kind, yet so wonderfully calm and cool, he knew that he was saved; she said indignantly: "Just a moment, sir, I have to get dressed. . . ." She repeated the words in broken English, and received a coarsely muttered reply, which, although unintelligible, sounded like an obscenity delivered with a broad grin. But Reinhard had already changed, and had donned along with his clothes a wonderful, buoyant sense of freedom that intoxicated him. He felt his way toward the cellar door, threw his old stuff down the steps, and went back to the front door in his stocking feet.

The woman regarded him with a smile, and he asked her in

a whisper: "Are you really alone here?" When she nodded, he calmly pulled back the bolt on the door. A huge figure, of almost animal perfection in its proportions, a childlike, unhewn face, and the embarrassed yet still threatening question uttered in broken French: "German soldier . . . no see?" Since he had addressed his question to the woman, she answered calmly: "No," and shook her head, and, as he turned to scrutinize the man, closely and searchingly, and seemed about to seize him by the shoulder with his massive hand, she added: "This is my husband, he's—" but the word "mute" was cut off amiably by Reinhard, who pulled back the hair at his forehead with a brilliantly acted show of pride and revealed a broad, still pinkly gleaming scar that crossed his brow like the stroke of a sword: "I was wounded, comrade . . . up by the canal . . . at . . ." and he rummaged in his coat pocket as if he meant to produce his papers. "Legionnaire," he added in a murmur, but the giant, had he ever been in doubt, seemed convinced by his fluent French, and touched his cap in smiling salute and apology. There was an incomparable animal elegance in his movements as he turned and shouldered his way out the door. "That's not Europe," the woman said softly. Then the two of them were alone.

Once the peril and the compassion that provided the driving force behind this brief scene had faded, they were overcome by embarrassment. Reinhard mopped his perspiration-soaked brow and took a deep puff of his still-burning cigarette. He still believed he was half dreaming, for eternity had descended upon him, compressed into minutes. With a helpless smile he asked sadly: "What now?" It couldn't have been more than five minutes since he was standing by the car, dreaming of peace, lost

in the tranquillity of the afternoon. And now he was standing helpless and destitute in this dim, cool hallway beside a woman he didn't know, astonished by her rare beauty, in misery—drowned in deepest misery. . . .

The face of the woman was cool and reserved, as if she only now realized what she had done in all the excitement. She seemed to be thinking things over as the uncanny silence of the house, heightened by the noise from the street, rippled between them, unfamiliar and oppressive.

Finally, with a gesture of resignation, she rebolted the door, stepped into the hall, and said coldly: "Come this way." There was something almost businesslike in her movements, as if she were conducting a customer into the office of a doctor or lawyer. She opened a door at the end of the hall and entered; depressed, he followed her like a condemned man.

The odor of the dim, tasteful, somewhat overdecorated room engulfed him, delicate and almost gracious, like a true expression of the woman's nature. As if peril and misery were forcing him inexorably to the rim of an abyss, he sensed with dismay that he was becoming increasingly captivated by her beauty. He closed the door softly. She sat in an armchair, her hands propped, while he stood leaning against a sideboard. "Sit down," she said, with what seemed like irritation. He sat down obediently, and as he did so, he was struck by how magnificently the trousers fit. Ridiculous, he thought. The woman's face suddenly lifted toward him like a somber disk. Her large, gray-veiled eyes were sad, and she said softly, without rancor, as if speaking to herself: "You know, I was just thinking, you may be the one who kills my husband at the front."

Reinhard shook his head wearily: "I won't kill any more people in this war, ma'am."

"Are you so sure?" she said quietly, almost imploringly. "How do you know what fate might drive you to, when you might be in a position where it's a matter of life and death to fire in some direction, and might that not be my husband? You want to make it back to Germany, don't you?"

Reinhard blushed. "I want to see my wife."

She glanced briefly at his wedding ring. "The war is far from over, and who can trust a German?" She looked at him searchingly, as if she truly wanted to sound his depths. "I should have turned you in," she continued in a flat voice. "It probably wouldn't even have cost you your life. If Robert doesn't return, I'll feel for the rest of my life that I was his murderer." She smiled suddenly, a beautiful, heartfelt smile. "I love Robert more than my life."

He felt himself turn pale. A wild, unfamiliar, tremendously powerful, seemingly irresistible desire for the woman sitting before him flooded over him, gliding like a secret sorrow. It flowed into him, and it seemed as if his own wife's beautiful face were smiling at him as well, filled with pity and love. He was so miserable, so miserable and forlorn, trapped between obstacles.

"Tell me what to do, ma'am," he said in hoarse agitation, "for all I care, you can lock me up in your cellar like an animal, or I can leave your house now and mix in with the crowd." He rose. He wanted so badly to flee, simply to flee; but then the clamor from the street rose like a tornado twisting into the heavens. Cries could be heard, doors and windows slammed.

The woman pulled open the door of the adjoining room, rushed to the window, and peered out past the curtain, breathing rapidly. Khaki figures raced down the street in retreat, and at that same moment a savage burst of fire from a German machine gun swept the roadway like a cruel, invisible broom. The fiendishly rapid spray of bullets gurgled down the canyon of the street like disaster incarnate. All the buildings seemed suddenly desolate, the facades stared emptily, gripped once more by terror. Reinhard shook his head, trembling in agitation. "They really are insane," he murmured in German, without noticing the woman's mistrustful look.

He was deeply shocked as the first gray figure rounded the corner, soiled and dusty. He knew the trooper's cynical face. It was Grote, carrying the slim black machine gun under his arm like a delicate, dangerous animal. Grote, a fine soldier constantly wavering between desertion and the possibility that he might one day wear the highest medals. Yet his face was totally miserable. Reinhard's heart beat wildly, insistently; he'd forgotten everything. He no longer realized he was wearing the soft, lightweight clothing of a civilian. The gray desolation of the army weighed once more upon his shoulders, and without looking toward the woman, he walked slowly, slowly into the hall. A dull pounding at the door awakened him from his dark, brooding mood; he took a few steps, tore open the door, and pulled a totally collapsed body in a khaki uniform inside, a split second before a new troop of gray soldiers darted around the corner and the sound of a savage whip hissed through the narrow street again.

Reinhard bent over the exhausted man, but the woman, who had followed close on his heels, grabbed his shoulder

roughly and yelled: "Don't kill him!" Reinhard looked at her, releasing his hands from the fatigued man's chest, and his eyes contained equal measures of unspeakable astonishment and terrible sorrow. He gazed fixedly at her delicate, flushed face with its dark eyes and said softly, as if he could hardly trust his own words: "Do you really take me for a swine, ma'am?" Then he slowly unbuttoned the man's jacket, undid his belt, seized the inert body under the arms, and dragged him into the living room. Slowly, her arms hanging helplessly at her sides, the woman followed. He moved his hands cautiously about the man's body, sensing the silent presence of the woman at his back, pleasing and oppressive at the same time, like a gentle, inexorable wall pushing him nearer and nearer to an abyss. A pale, almost yellowish childlike face, distorted by fear, numb with exhaustion, small, fleshy hands, a shock of touchingly youthful brown hair. He could discover no wound on the body; his pulse was weak, but steady. Perhaps the youngster was only unconscious after all. Reinhard turned slowly, his gaze slipped hurriedly, nervously, past the glowing face. Her youthful, totally transfigured look of sweet shame stirred him strangely, and, his face turned toward the door, he said: "I can't find any wound." But she merely stammered: "Please forgive me. . . ." and now he had to look at her. All that was foreign and cold had fallen from her, and she was so close and familiar and so terribly beautiful that it startled him. Cheerfully, with a smile, he took the hand she offered him, pressed it firmly, so that he wouldn't feel the wild coursing of her blood, this blood a stranger to his own, and then said: "I have nothing to forgive you for, ma'am."

They both regarded this small, poor, unknown soldier as a

gift from heaven. What would have happened to them had they been left alone? Outside, in the renewed silence, the heavy tramp of boots in the street, and farther off the rattle of the machine gun. It must be at the park entrance now, near the bullet-riddled car. Reinhard washed the face of the young man while she held the bowl, then made him as comfortable as he could. He could still hear the faint beating of the boy's heart. Now they could look at each other without fear or blushing. Something akin to joy lay in their eyes, a cheerful renunciation, and they knew they needed to wage a fierce battle deep within themselves, for and against each other, to remain faithful. Once again the machine gun gnashed its teeth somewhere in the park, like a file rasping angrily across a thousand tiny, sharp fangs. Reinhard jerked as if the entire burst of gunfire had struck him in the heart. Some uncontrollable urge bound him to the terror and misery outside, and he felt he had to tear himself free, quickly and irrevocably, as from a mysterious umbilical cord. He stretched, put the washcloth aside, and said: "I'd better get rid of my uniform now. You'll be alone for a few minutes." She looked at him in surprise, slightly startled. "And what if the Ger—your countrymen capture you?" Reinhard turned toward the door. "It's not the Germans or Americans I'm running from, ma'am, it's the war. Anyway, I think the Americans are in control this evening."

It was a somber, terrible business, emptying the pockets of the miserable rags in the cellar, with their dangling, half-broken decorations, bundling them together. It seemed gruesome, like looting a corpse, and he tried to do it as quickly and hurriedly as possible, like a necessary yet still nasty task, as if he were secretly burying a murdered man. When he had placed

the tangle of clothes in a trash can and concealed it beneath some rubbish, he quickly climbed the stairs again. His hands felt dirty, as if they would never be clean again, and the war, with its cruel necessities, seemed more terrible than ever.

Something akin to jealousy shot through him as he found the woman sitting beside the stranger in the living room, enveloped in the fragrance of aromatic cigarettes, but he was instantly ashamed, as if he had once again defiled himself. She had draped a blue cloak over her pale rose sundress, and he felt he would have to tie his hands to keep from taking her in his arms. He greeted the newly awakened young man with reserve. His curiously childlike and yet depraved eyes responded politely, but with the condescension of the victorious soldier facing a civilian who has remained safely in his home. "*Merci*," he said awkwardly, offering him the pack of cigarettes with a smile, then, turning to the woman, he chewed out an unintelligible sentence in which a few words were clear: crazy . . . German . . . damned animals. Then he turned abruptly to Reinhard and asked in broken French: "What are they still fighting for, these Germans?" He gestured vaguely outside, where the machine gun again raised its hoarse, threatening bark. Reinhard looked from one to the other uncertainly, but the woman calmed him with a slight shake of her head. This quiet, gentle indication of a bond moved him so deeply that a shiver ran through him.

The whole house was suddenly shaken by a powerful detonation. This was followed by waves of weapon fire in the area. The woman sprang up and leaned against the wall, pale and trembling. Reinhard approached her, placed his hand on her arm, and said calmly: "You're safe, ma'am, that's artillery fire.

No, no, believe me, you have nothing to worry about." He watched the stranger's face closely, but a smile triumphed over the young man's initial shock as he cried: "Those are our shells . . . those are ours!"

Several more shells exploded among the buildings with deafening noise, the dark murmur of advancing tanks could be heard, and the abrupt crack of their cannons, sounding like a sudden blowout, followed by the shattering din of the impact. A few minutes later, from behind the curtain, they again saw the gray figures of the Germans running down the street, a frightening indifference in their gait.

The tanks rolled past the corner again, heading up the street, as the small stranger with the pale child's face smiled, laid a bar of chocolate on the table, shook hands warmly with them both, and left the building. The silence of the house enveloped them again, and now they were alone.

Reinhard went to the door, which the young man had left open, and stuck his head out for an instant before bolting it, feeling the cool, gentle evening air, with its delicate summery smells already offering a foretaste of autumn as it descended upon the beautiful, incomparable city. And perhaps it was the greatest offense of his life, the greatest, that he didn't simply leave the house, but instead turned back, slowly and heavily, into the dusk of the hall, which had become thicker and darker.

The woman stood at the open window, her arms crossed, staring out into the evening at the gardens. Like a piece of bad theater, the sound of voices, high-pitched and somehow tinged with excited joy, arose once more from the street, and it seemed as if these scenes might alternate throughout eternity.

As if wishing to hide even from herself, the woman stood in

the recess of the window and did not turn as Reinhard entered. She gazed into the evening sky, its blue now touched with gentle shades of rose and lilac, stretching like a delicate tent above the splendid summer day now coming to a close, a day on which so many men had perished in the cruel arms of war. She seemed to shiver, although the soft breeze was still mild and pleasant. Her shoulders were hunched, she had buttoned the fine blue wool cloak about her, and her pale face, with the small red fruit of the mouth, appeared almost dead. The room was already wrapped in darkness, although it was still bright outside, as bright and friendly and beautiful as Paris, the incomparable city in which the war still raged. Reinhard gazed at her spellbound. Just half a second more, he thought, I'll just look at her, just look, then I'll slip away as quickly and quietly as I can. I'll run and run until the nearness of the distant woman I love extinguishes the terrible, consuming fire within me.

But the woman turned around, suddenly, abruptly, as if she had just awakened, and said softly: "You'll have to leave the house by way of those gardens when it's completely dark. Believe me, a thousand pairs of eyes have seen you enter the house, and any one of them would recognize you again. They don't think you're here anymore, because the house has already been searched."

He protested in a state of shock: "But that means I'll have to wait here several more hours." He felt fear rise within him, wild desires and opposing thoughts, and he was surprised by the joyful smile with which she said: "Do you find it so terrible to be my prisoner until darkness falls?" adding with a wry smile: "But wait a moment . . ." She walked past him and he heard her leave the house.

He breathed a sigh of relief. Was he so weak and foolish he couldn't spend two hours beside this beautiful woman without succumbing ineluctably to the terrible sin of betrayal? He had carried the image of his beloved unscathed through all the dangers and temptations, the infinite agonies of war. Was he to give it up now, without wishing to, seduced by the dark, melodious voice of ruin hovering over this city, trapped now in the dusk of this house? Yes, it would be truly stupid to risk his escape for a foolish weakness. Smiling, he lit one of the American's cigarettes and turned on the light. But it seemed as if the dusk, the sweet sense of being lost, couldn't be banished by the warm, bright flood of light, either. It hovered among furniture, in the gaps, even above the reddish lamp shade itself, the sweet fragrance of being lost, drawing him into its spell. Ghastly and sweet, it flowed in, as if the joyful visage of the beautiful city was dissolving into insane caresses, blurred and enticing, as if enveloped by the mists of ruin.

The noise of battle spread steadily throughout the city. From time to time it fell silent, only to burst forth again like the dull blasts of a trumpet. The war's progress could be measured easily by its sounds; it was actually possible to sense the increasing depth and expanse of the blows, to feel the gray soldiers' weakening resistance, and in the streets, as the curtain lifted, the sounds of life swelled forth again.

The evening slowly filled the last bright light of day with blue shadows. It seemed to fall softly, tenderly, friendly and familiar, no more than the darker sister of the cheerful day. Twilight seemed to smile upon this immense and beautiful city, to drape its vast, dark blue cloak around her, as if it couldn't be angry with her, enfolding her in a quiet, loving, and inef-

fably tender embrace, openly, with no thought for the poor hearts of those who stand aside in misery, weeping, weeping in the arms of longing.

Reinhard turned the light back off. For an instant it seemed completely dark, but then the last gleams of daylight plunged through the open window into the thick dusk of the room. The window was like a benevolent shaft in a prison. Delicate reddish gleams flowed in; they seemed mingled inextricably with the confusing, yet bittersweet smells of the evening, breath and light in one, which wafted beneath the gentle trees of the boulevard. They penetrated to the young man hidden behind the curtains and breathing deeply, brushing him like the terrible caress of a beautiful woman who teases but will not yield. He groaned as if his life's blood were streaming forth, and felt his misery, his total abandonment in this foreign, hostile city, like a single, massive wound, lashed by the inescapable blandishment of his senses. He tore himself away as if he had been anchored to this shadowy play, stumbled through the dusk to the door, pulled it open, and hurried down the hall to the front entrance. But then he paused as if nailed to the spot, for he heard fate itself approaching. The front door opened and the soft steps of the woman came toward him. He saw nothing, nothing at all in the darkness of the hall, as if it were a solid fabric, but never, never in the thousands of seconds that long afternoon had he seen more clearly. He saw her whole, his heart was torn from him, and as the tiny steps approached, he braced himself against the wall, as if forced backwards by an invisible power. His eyes closed, his entire being writhed in pain, and he simply reached out, vaguely, as if he were trying to catch a bird flying past, and at the first tender touch he sensed that

she too was unable to flee. And as her tears burned upon his cheeks, he longed for the entire darkness of night to crash down around them and bury them in its rubble.

When they awakened, they were so distant ice water might have been flowing between them, distant and cold, lying together a bad dream, while the milky light of the moon streamed mockingly through the open window of the room. She turned her face aside with a shudder and her entire being, mysterious and unfathomable, seemed hidden with her face behind the dark curtain of her hair. Reinhard rose, passed his hand wearily through his hair. He was shivering. Provocative and threatening, the uncanny stillness entered the haze woven of their own confusion within the room, where despairing caresses seemed to have taken hold like poisons.

He slowly pulled on his shoes, which stood beneath the wardrobe as if awaiting him. He shuddered, shuddered again, and a wild fear kept him from turning around; never had he suffered such misery as in this cold night hour, which seemed to mock the tenderness of day and evening, the hour in which, in this deeply foreign city, the myriad dangers of a daring flight ahead, he creeps from the bedroom of a beautiful woman whose sobs express the desolation lodged in his own miserable heart, arid and ineradicable. No, never again in his life could he turn back.

He moved slowly, cautiously, as if fearing to awaken the stillness, to the window; but as he was about to swing over the low sill, the muffled sound of her bare feet froze him in his tracks. He felt the blood flow like ice through his veins and, trembling as if he were about to look directly into the true, naked face of death, he quickly turned his head. And it was strange that this

lovely face, sweeter and more beautiful than ever, with its small, smiling bud of a mouth, that this face, like a gently compelling mirror, forced from him a joyful, open, and innocent smile. There was no longer the slightest fiber of his being that this woman desired. Her eyes simply compelled him to throw off the entire burden, and with her small, slender hand, she passed him a slim bundle of banknotes, which he stuck in his pocket without looking. He seized her hand unhesitatingly and pressed it. "This may help you," she said in a small voice, "and don't be sad. The three who love us: God, your wife, and my husband, may well forgive us," and she kissed him quickly and lightly on the forehead. Then he swung himself out and walked toward the cold face of the moon.