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8.

"Oh, my love, now I know your will completely. I know that it will come to pass, but what will it be like? How will people live then?"

"I can't tell you that by myself. I need the help of my older sister, the one who first appeared to you a long time ago. She's both my mistress and my servant. I can only be what she makes of me, and yet she works for me. Sister, come to my aid."

The Sister of her Sisters, the Bride of her Briderooms appears.

"Greetings, sister," she says to the goddess. "Are you here too, sister?" she asks Vera Pavlovna. "Do you wish to see how people will live when my ward, the goddess, rules over everyone? Then behold."

There stands a building, a large, enormous structure such as can only be seen in a few of the grandest capitals. No, now there's no other building like it! It stands amidst fields and meadows, orchards and groves. The fields grow grain, but they aren't like the ones we have now; rather, they're rich and abundant. Is that really wheat? Whoever saw ears and kernels like these? Now such ears and kernels can only be grown in greenhouses. The fields are our fields, but now such blossoms can only be seen in flower gardens. The orchards are full of lemons and orange trees, peach and apricot—how can they grow in the fresh air? Oh, there are columns surrounding them, all open for summer. Yes, these are greenhouses opened up for summer. The groves are our groves—oak and linden, maple and elm—yes, the groves are just like ours now. Great care has been lavished on them; there's not a single diseased tree. But the groves are just like ours, they alone have remained the same as they were before. But this building—what on earth is it? What style of architecture? There's nothing at all like it now. No, there is one building that hints at it—the palace at Sydenham:⁹ cast iron and crystal, crystal and cast iron—nothing else. No, that's not all; it's merely the shell of the building, its external facade. Inside there's a real house, a colossal one, surrounded by this crystal and cast iron edifice as if by a sheath, forming broad galleries around it on every floor. What graceful architecture in the inner house! What narrow spaces between the windows! The windows themselves are huge, wide, and stretch the entire height of each floor. The stone walls look like a row of pilasters that form a frame for these windows looking out onto

8. This section probably signifies the revolution, which Chernyshevsky could not describe because of tsarist censorship.

9. A reference to the Crystal Palace, an innovative building of glass and steel designed by Sir Joseph Paxton and erected at Hyde Park in London for the Great Exhibition in 1851.

the galleries. What sort of floors and ceilings are these? Of what material are these doors and window frames made? What is it? Silver? Platinum? Almost all the furniture is made the same way! Wooden furniture here is merely a whim, something for variety's sake. But of what are all the other pieces, the ceilings, and the floors made? "Try to move this armchair," says the elder goddess. The metallic furniture is lighter than walnut. What kind of metal is it? Oh, now I know. Sasha once showed me a small piece of it that was as light as glass. They make earrings and brooches from it now. Yes, Sasha said that sooner or later aluminum¹ would replace wood, and perhaps even stone. How elegant it all is! Aluminum and more aluminum; all the spaces between the windows are hung with huge mirrors. What carpets on the floors! Here in this hall half the floor has been left uncovered and one can see that it too is made of aluminum. "You see, it's been left unpolished so that it won't be too slippery. Children play here, and adults do, too. In that hall the floor has been left completely uncovered for dancing. There are tropical flowers and trees everywhere. The entire house is a huge winter garden."

But who lives in this house which is more magnificent than any palace? "Many people live here, a great many. Come along and we shall see them."

They go out onto the balcony that leads off the top floor of the gallery. Why hadn't Vera Pavlovna noticed them before? Groups of people are scattered throughout the fields. There are men and women everywhere, old people and young, together with children. But primarily there are young people. There are very few old men and even fewer old women; there are more children than old men, but not many of them either. More than half the children have remained inside to attend to the housework. They do almost all the chores and enjoy their work very much. A few old women work with them. But there are really very few old men and women here because people grow old very late. Life is so healthy and peaceful that it preserves one's freshness.

The groups working in the fields are almost all singing. What kind of labor are they doing? Oh, they're gathering in the grain. How quickly it progresses! Why shouldn't it? Why shouldn't they be singing? Machines are doing almost all the work for them—reaping, binding the sheaves, and carting them away. People have only to walk alongside, or ride, or drive the machines. How cleverly they've arranged it all for themselves. Although the weather's very hot, it doesn't bother them at all. They've erected a huge canopy over the part of the field where there're working. As the work progresses, the canopy gets moved along too. How cool they stay! Why shouldn't their labor go quickly and

1. A metallic element first isolated by Friedrich Wöhler in 1827 and produced industrially in 1854.

cheerfully? Why shouldn't they be singing? I too wouldn't mind harvesting under such conditions! And there are songs and more songs, all of them new and unfamiliar. Now they're singing one of ours which I know too:

You and I will live like kings:
These people are our friends—
Whatever your heart desires,
I will acquire it all with them.²

Now the work is finished and everyone returns to the building. "Let's go back to the hall and see how they dine," says the elder sister. They enter the largest of the huge halls. Half of it is occupied by tables which have already been set. There are so many of them! How many people dine here? A thousand or more. Not everyone's here; those who prefer, dine in their own rooms. The old men and women and the children who didn't work in the fields have prepared everything. "To prepare food, do the housework, clean the rooms—this work is too easy for other hands," says the elder sister. "It's appropriate that such tasks be done by those who aren't yet able, or who are no longer able, to do anything else." What splendid place settings! All aluminum and crystal. Vases with flowers have been placed in the center of the wide tables. The food has already been served. The workers have entered and sat down to dinner, as have those who prepared the meal.

"Who'll serve the food?"

"When? During the meal? Why? There are only five or six courses. Those dishes which are supposed to be hot have been positioned so that they won't grow cold. Do you see these indentations? They're steam tables," explains the elder sister.

"You live well and like to eat well. Do you dine like this often?"

"Several times a year."

"Here this is regular fare: whoever desires can have better food, whatever he wants, and a separate account is kept. No such account is kept for those who don't require anything except those dishes prepared for all. Everything else is arranged in the same way. What everyone can afford together is provided free; but a charge is made for any special item or whim."

"Is that really us? Is that really our country? I heard one of our own songs and they are all speaking Russian."

"Yes, you see that river not far from here? It's the Oka.³ These people are Russians—for when I'm with you, I too am a Russian."

"Did you accomplish all this?"

"All this was accomplished for my sake; I inspired it and inspire its

completion. But it's she, my elder sister, the worker, who's bringing it into being. I merely delight in it."

"And will everyone live like this?"

"Everyone," says the elder sister. "For everyone there will be eternal spring and summer and joy everlasting. But we've shown you only the end of my half of the day; the work part, and the beginning of her half. We'll look in on them again during an evening two months from now."

9.

"The flowers have withered and the leaves have begun to fall from the trees; the scene has become more desolate.

"You see, it would be tedious to keep looking at all this and very boring to live here," says the younger sister. "I don't want to live like this."

"The halls are empty; there's no one left in the fields or gardens," says the elder sister. "I arranged all this according to the will of my sister, the goddess."

"Has the palace really been deserted?"

"Yes, for now it's cold and damp. Why should anyone live here? Out of some two thousand people only ten or twenty eccentrics remain who feel that for once it would provide a pleasant diversion to stay in this remote and solitary area and experience a northern autumn. Soon, during the winter, there'll be constant changes: small groups of people who like winter outings will arrive to spend a few days here."

"But where are they all now?"

"Wherever it's warm and pleasant," says the elder sister. "In the summer, when it's nice to be here and there's work to be done, many different guests arrive from the south. We were in a building where all the inhabitants came from your country. But a great many houses had to be built to accommodate all the guests; in some, people from different lands have settled together with their hosts. Each person chooses the company which suits him best. But, having received this multitude of guests for the summer to help with the work, you can head south to spend the other seven or eight unpleasant months of the year; each person goes wherever he chooses. There's a special region in the south where the majority of your people go. It's even called "New Russia."

"Is that where Odessa and Kherson are?"⁴

"That was in your time. Behold: here's New Russia."

Mountains are clad in gardens; between them stand narrow valleys and broad ravines. "Previously these mountains were barren cliffs," says the elder sister. "Now they're covered with a thick layer of soil; groves of very tall trees grow among gardens. Below, in moist hollows, are

4. Both major cities and ports in southern Russia. Odessa is located on the coast of the Black Sea, while Kherson lies near the mouth of the Dnieper River.

2. A quotation from the poem "Flight" (1838) by the lyric poet Aleksei Koltsov (1808-1842).

3. A northern tributary of the Volga River, the Oka lies somewhat south and east of Moscow.

coffee plantations. Date palms and fig trees stand above; vineyards are interspersed among sugar cane plantations; in the green fields grows some wheat, but mainly rice."

"What country is this?"

"Let's climb a little higher and you'll see its borders."

Far off to the northeast there are two rivers which flow together and head due east from where Vera Pavlovna stands. Farther to the south, still in the same southeasterly direction, there lies a long, wide bay. The land extends far to the south, continually growing wider between that bay and another longer, narrow one which forms its western boundary. Between the small western bay and the sea far to the northwest lies a narrow isthmus.

"We're in the middle of a desert," says Vera Pavlovna in astonishment.

"Well, in the middle of a former desert. But now, as you can see, this whole expanse of land from the north, from that large river in the northeast, has been transformed into the most fertile fields, just as the other strip along the sea to the north once used to be and now is once again, the strip that once upon a time was called 'the land of milk and honey.'⁵ You can see that we're not far from the southern boundary of the cultivated land. The mountainous part of the peninsula is still a barren, sandy steppe, such as the whole area used to be in your day. With each passing year you Russians are pushing back the edge of the desert further to the south. Other people are at work in other countries; everyone has ample room and sufficient work. Life is spacious and abundant. Yes, from the great northeastern river the entire expanse of land to the middle of the peninsula in the south is now green and covered with flowers. Throughout the whole area, just as in the north, enormous buildings stand three or four versts apart, like innumerable huge chessmen on a gigantic chessboard. Let's go down and enter one of them," says the elder sister.

It's the same sort of enormous crystal building, but its columns are white.

"They're made of aluminum," explains the elder sister. "It's very hot here and white doesn't absorb heat in the direct sun. It's a bit more expensive than cast-iron, but it's better suited to local conditions."

Look what else they've invented! For a considerable distance all around the crystal palace there stand rows of tall, thin pillars; on top of them, high above the entire palace and for about half a verst around, stretches a white canopy. "It's continually being sprinkled with water,"

5. An allusion both to the land promised by God to Moses for the Jews (Exodus 3:8) and to the biblical garden of Eden. The area described is the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, viewed by Vera Pavlovna from the Sinai Peninsula, where, on Mount Sinai, Moses received the Ten Commandments.

explains the elder sister. "From each pillar a small fountain rises above the canopy spraying drops of water like rain. Consequently, it's cool to reside here. You see, they can adjust the temperature as they please."

"But what if someone likes the intense heat and bright southern sun?"

"Do you see those pavilions and tents way out there in the distance? Everyone can live just as he pleases. I'm striving toward that end, working in order to bring it about."

"Then are there still cities left for those who wish to live in them?"

"Yes, but there aren't very many people left like that. There are fewer cities now and they are all located near the best harbors as centers of communication and transportation. But these cities are larger and more splendid than before. Everyone visits them for a few days in search of diversion. The majority of their inhabitants changes constantly. People go there only to work for a brief period."

"But what about those who want to live there all the time?"

"They do, just as you live in those Petersburgs, Parises, and Londons of yours. Whose business is it? Who would interfere? Let each person live as he chooses. The vast majority, however, ninety-nine people out of a hundred, live as my sister and I have shown you because it's more pleasant and advantageous for them. But now let's go into the palace. It's already quite late in the evening and time to see them."

"But no, first I want to know how it all came about."

"How *what* came about?"

"How the barren desert was transformed into fertile land where almost everyone spends two-thirds of the year."

"How it came about? There's nothing strange about it! All of this transpired not in one year, not even in ten; I accomplished it gradually. From the banks of the great river in the northeast and the shores of the great sea in the southwest, people transported clay on their mighty machines to bind the sand. They dug canals and irrigated the land; vegetation began to appear and, as a result, there was more moisture in the air. They moved forward, step by step, a few versts a year, sometimes only one, just as now they keep advancing toward the south. What's so unusual about that? People merely became more intelligent and began to turn to their own advantage the tremendous means and resources which had previously been wasted or used counterproductively. I've not been working and teaching in vain. It was even difficult for them to understand what was most useful. During your time people were still savages, such coarse, cruel, and reckless creatures. But I kept teaching them. Once they began to understand, it was not hard for them to make progress. You know that I require nothing too difficult. Why you yourself are doing something for me, in my own way! Is it really so hard?"

"No."

"Of course not. Remember your own dressmaking establishment? Did you have many resources? Any more than others?"

"No. We had no resources to speak of."

"But now your seamstresses have ten times more comfort. They enjoy life twenty times as much and experience unpleasantness a hundred times less than others who had the same resources as you. You've proven that even in your own time people can lead a free and easy life. One has only to be rational, to know how to organize, and to learn how to use resources most advantageously."

"Yes, yes. I know that."

"Let's see how people live only a short time after they've come to understand what you've long understood."

10.

"They enter the building. It's the same sort of enormous, majestic hall. The evening is well under way. It's already three hours after sunset, a time for merrymaking. How brightly the hall is lit, but how? There are neither candelabra nor chandeliers! Oh, that's it! In the dome there hangs a large pane of frosted glass through which light pours into the room. Of course, that's just how it ought to be: pale, soft, bright light, just like sunlight. Yes, indeed, it's electric light.⁶ There are about a thousand people in the hall, but it could easily accommodate three times that number.

"And it happens, when guests come to visit," says the radiant beauty, "there can be more people here."

"Well, what sort of event is it? A ball? Surely it's not just an ordinary weekday evening?"

"Of course."

"Nowadays this would be a palace ball. The women are dressed so elegantly. Yes, indeed, times have changed, that's clear from the cut of their dresses. A few ladies are wearing the clothes of our time, but obviously it's being done for variety's sake, as an amusement. Yes, they're being silly, mocking our apparel. Others are wearing different costumes—the most diverse kinds, various eastern and southern styles, all much more graceful than ours. But the most popular costume is similar to that which Grecian women wore during the elegant Athenian period. It's very light and loose-fitting. The men wear long, wide tunics without waists, like cloaks or togas. Apparently, it's their ordinary domestic wear. How modest and lovely! It outlines their bodies so elegantly and exquisitely; it enhances the grace of all their movements.

6. Electric lighting became widespread in urban Russia only in the early twentieth century.

And what an orchestra! More than a hundred men and women! Best of all, what a chorus!"

"Yes, today in all of Europe you couldn't find ten such fine voices, one hundred of which are now gathered in this hall. It's the same in every other hall. The way of life here is so different: it's healthy and very elegant. As a result, the chest improves and the voice does too," explains the radiant beauty. But the members of both the orchestra and the chorus are constantly changing: some leave while others take their place. Some go off to dance, others return.

It's an ordinary, weekday evening. People dance like this and make merry every evening. But when have I ever seen such energy in merriment? But how can their merriment help but possess an energy unknown to us? They spend the morning engaged in very hard work. Anyone who's not put in a good day's work hasn't sufficiently prepared his nervous system to experience the fullness of such enjoyment. The merriment of simple people, when they have occasion to make merry, is so much more joyous, lively, and spontaneous than ours. But now our simple people have very meager means for amusement; here the means are so much greater than even ours are. Furthermore, the merriment of our simple people is marred by the memory of various inconveniences and deprivations, misfortunes and sufferings, and by a foreboding of even more in the future. They have but a fleeting moment when grief and need are forgotten. Is it ever really possible to forget one's grief and need entirely? Don't the deserts cover everything with sand? Don't the marshy miasmas contaminate even a small amount of good land and air lying between desert and swamp? But there are no such memories here, no danger of grief or need, only the recollection of free and willing labor, of abundance, goodness, and enjoyment. Here we have only the expectation of more of the same in the future. What a contrast! And again, the nervous system of our workers today is strong, but nothing more; although they can withstand considerable merriment, they are coarse and insensitive. Whereas here their constitution is still strong, like that of our workers, as well as developed and impressionable, like our own. But they also possess a readiness to make merry, a healthy, strong desire for enjoyment which we lack; such is granted only to those of sound health who do physical labor. In such people these qualities are combined with all the delicacy of feeling which we possess. They have all our moral development combined with the physical growth of our strong working people. It's easy to understand why their merriment, enjoyment, and passion are so much stronger, broader, sweeter, and livelier than ours. What fortunate people!

No, people still don't know what genuine merriment really is because neither the kind of life nor the sort of people necessary for it yet exists.

Only people such as these can enjoy themselves completely and know the full ecstasy of pleasure. How they burst with health and strength, how graceful and elegant they are, how energetic and expressive their features! They're all so lucky, such handsome men and women, leading a free life of work and enjoyment. What fortunate people! What fortunate people!

Half of them are enjoying themselves exuberantly in the large hall. But where's the other half?

"Where are the others?" repeats the radiant beauty. "They're everywhere. Many are at the theater, some as actors, others as musicians, and still others as spectators, just as they desire. Some are in lecture halls, museums, and libraries. Others are in garden avenues or in their own rooms, relaxing alone or with their children. As for the rest: that's my secret.⁷ In the hall you saw how their cheeks glowed and their eyes sparkled. You saw how they came and went. When they leave, it's I who lures them away. The room of each man and woman is my sanctuary. Within those walls my mysteries are inviolable. The curtained doors and thick carpets absorb every sound. Silence and mystery prevail. They return: it's I who brings them back from my kingdom of mysteries into the realm of light entertainment. I reign here.

"Here I reign. Everything is done for my sake! Work equals replenishment of feeling and strength for me; enjoyment equals preparation for me, relaxation after me. I constitute the purpose of life here; I am all of life."

11.

"Life's greatest happiness resides in my sister, the goddess," says the elder sister. "But you see that every kind of happiness exists here, whatever anyone desires. Everyone lives as he desires; each and every person has complete will, yes, free will.

"What we've shown you will not soon reach its full development in the form that you've just seen. Many generations will pass before everything which you can now foresee is to be fully realized. No, not many generations. My work is progressing quickly, faster with each passing year. Nevertheless, you still won't enter into my sister's completed kingdom. But at least you've glimpsed it, and now you know what the future will be. It's radiant and beautiful. Tell everyone that the future will be radiant and beautiful. Love it, strive toward it, work for it, bring it nearer, transfer into the present as much as you can from it. To the extent that you succeed in doing so, your life will be bright and good, rich in joy and pleasure. Strive toward it, work for it, bring it nearer, transfer into the present as much as you can from it."

7. An allusion to sexual love.

RESPONSES

