Three Deaths

Leo Tolstoy

1859

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I.

It was Autumn. A carriage and a calesche were proceeding at a sharp trot along the high-road. In the carriage sat two women. One of them was the mistress, thin and pale. The other was the maid, smug, florid, and buxom. Her short dry tresses peeped forth from under her faded bonnet, her pretty hand in her torn glove readjusted them from time to time; her swelling bosom, covered by a rug, was full of the breath of health; her quick black eyes glanced at one moment out of the window at the scurrying fields, at another stared boldly at her mistress, or glanced uneasily at the corners of the carriage. Before the very nose of the waiting-maid the bonnet of her mistress, attached to the netting of the carriage, rocked to and fro; on her knees lay a lap-dog, her legs were hunched up, the hand-box standing on the floor of the carriage and the drumming of her feet upon it was just audible amid the creaking of the carriage-springs and the clattering of the window-glasses.

With her hands on her knees, and closed eyes, the mistress rocked softly on the pillows piled up behind her, and kept on coughing an internal cough, at the same time slightly wrinkling her brows. On her head was a white night-cap, and a blue handkerchief was fastened round her fresh, white neck. The straight parting, continuing beneath the night-cap, divided the reddish, extraordinarily flat, well-preserved hair, and there was something dry and death-like in the whiteness of the skin of this broad parting. The withered, somewhat yellowish skin hung somewhat loosely on the delicate and pretty face, and the cheeks and jaws had a pinkish hue. Her lips were dry and restless, her traveling cloth dress lay in straight folds over her shrunken bosom. Notwithstanding that her eyes were closed, the face of the mistress expressed weariness, irritation, and suffering.

The lackey, perched upon the box-seat, was dozing; the post-driver, shouting vigorously, whipped up his sturdy, sweating team of four, glancing around occasionally at the other post-driver behind him in the calesche, who was bawling out just as lustily. The broad, double traces of the rapidly revolving tires extended evenly along in the chalky mud of the road. The sky was gray and cold—a cold mist enveloped the plain and the road It was stuffy in the carriage, which smelt of *eau de cologne* and dust. The sick woman stretched back her head and gradually opened her eyes. Her large eyes were sparkling and of a very pretty dark color.

"There it is again," she said, irritably shoving aside with her pretty, wasted hand the corner of the crinoline of her maid, which had barely touched her leg, and her mouth pouted peevishly. The maid grasped her crinoline with both hands, rose for a moment on her sturdy legs, and sat a little further off. Her fresh face had a bright flush upon it. The beautiful dark eyes of the invalid greedily followed every movement of the maid. Presently the mistress rested both arms on the seat of the carriage, and also tried to raise herself in order to sit up a little higher, but her strength failed her. Her mouth pouted, and her whole face wore an expression of impotent, angry scorn.

"Help me, would you! It is really quite unnecessary. I can do it myself, only don't load me with your—what shall I call them—your sacks then—have a little mercy! Better not touch me at all if you can't do better than that!"

The mistress closed her eyes—presently she quickly raised her eyelids again and glanced at her maid. The maid, as she returned her gaze, nibbled at her pretty lower lip. A deep sigh arose from the invalid's breast, but the sigh ended in a cough. She turned aside, puckered her brow, and grasped her bosom with both hands. When the cough ceased she closed her eyes again and continued to sit motionless. The carriage and the calesche entered a village. The maid drew her plump hand from beneath her jacket and crossed herself.

"What is it?" asked her mistress.

"A posting-station, my lady."

"Why did you cross yourself? I ask."

"We passed the church, my lady."

The invalid turned to the window, and began slowly to cross herself, looking with all her big eyes at the large village church, round which the invalid's carriage was just then passing.

The carriage and calesche stopped together at the posting-station. Out of the calesche stepped the sick woman's husband and the doctor, who came up to the carriage.

"How are you now?" asked the doctor, taking her hand and feeling her pulse.

"Are you not a little tired, my friend?" inquired her husband in French, "Don't you want to get out?"

The maid, looking after her wraps, squeezed herself into a corner, so as to be as much out of the way of the conversation as possible.

"Pretty much the same as before, but it doesn't matter," replied the invalid. "I won't get out."

The husband, after pausing a short time, went into the post-station. The maid, skipping out of the carriage, tripped lightly on the tips of her toes over the mud into the open door.

"My feeling bad is no reason why you should not have your breakfast," said the invalid, smiling slightly at the doctor, who was standing at the carriage window. "Not one of them mind me," added she, as soon as the doctor had, with noiseless step, quitted her, and darted up the steps of the post-station like a lynx. "They are well—so it is all one to them. Oh, my God!"

"I tell you what, Edward Ivanovich," said the husband, encountering the doctor and pressing his arms with a merry smile, "I have ordered them to bring us a drink. What do you say to that?"

"Oh, that's all right," replied the doctor.

"And what about her?" asked the husband with a sigh, lowering his voice and raising his brows.

"I say that she cannot go as far as Italy—please God she may reach Moscow—especially this weather."

"My God, my God! What's to be done, then?"—and the husband put his hand over his eyes.

"Here!" he added, addressing the man who was bringing the drink.

"The idea must be given up," answered the doctor, shrugging his shoulders.

"But tell me what I am to do!" insisted the husband. "You know I have done everything to prevent her. I spoke about my means and about the children, whom we should have to leave behind, and about my affairs—and she would listen to nothing. She makes her plans for living abroad just as if she were quite well. And to tell her of her real condition!—well, you might just as well kill her outright."

"She's as good as dead already, you ought to know that, Vasily Dmitrievich. A person can't live when he has no lungs, and lungs can't grow again. It is melancholy, miserable. But what's to be done? All that you and I can now do is to take care that the rest of the road is as easy as possible. This is now a case for a priest."

"Ah, my God! you understand my position, how can I remind her of her last will! Come what may, I cannot tell her that. You know how good she is…"

"Nevertheless, you ought to try and persuade her to stop till the winter season," said the doctor, shaking his head significantly—"and then the roads might be bad."

"Aksusha! Aksusha!" screamed the daughter of the post-master, throwing a shawl round her head, and dashing down the muddy back staircase, "come and look at Lady Shirkinskaya, they say she's going abroad for breast sickness. I have never seen how consumptives look before."

Aksusha leaped across the threshold, and the pair of them, taking each other by the hand, ran out to the gate. Slackening their steps, they passed close to the carriage and stared into the open window. The invalid turned her head towards them, but, observing their curiosity, frowned and turned away.

"Little mother!" cried the post-master's daughter, quickly turning her head round, "how wonderfully beautiful she used to be, and what is she now! It is frightful. Did you see her—did you see her, Aksusha?"

"And how lean!" chimed in Aksusha. "Come, let us see what is in the bottom of the coach. Look, she has turned away, and I have not seen half. What a pity, Masha!"

"Yes, and how muddy it is!"—and they both ran back through the gate again.

"I suppose I do look frightful," thought the invalid.

"Oh, only let us make haste, make haste and go abroad, and then I shall soon pick up again."

"Well, how are you now, my friend?" said the husband, coming to the carriage, and still chewing a morsel of something.

"Always the same question!" thought the invalid.

"Anyhow, it doesn't seem to interfere with his appetite."

"Oh, it's nothing!" she murmured between her teeth.

"I'll tell you what, my friend, I fear you'll be all the worse for the journey, especially in this weather, and Edward Ivanovich says the same thing. What do you say to turning back home?"

She was too angry to speak.

"The weather may be better presently, we could postpone the journey, and you would then be better—we might all go together."

"Pardon me! If I hadn't listened to you all this time, I might have been in Berlin by now and quite well again."

"What was to be done, my angel, you know it was quite impossible. But if you would only stop at home for a month say, you would get ever so much better, I could complete my business, and we might take the children."

"The children are well, but I am not."

"But, my friend, just think! What with this weather, suppose you grew worse on the road … while at home, at any rate …"

"Home indeed! Why, I should only die at home," replied the sick woman passionately.

But the word *die* plainly frightened her—she grew silent and looked interrogatively at her husband. He cast down his eyes and was silent. The mouth of the invalid suddenly put on a childish pout and the tears flowed from her eyes. Her husband covered

his face with his pocket-handkerchief, and withdrew from the carriage.

"No, I will go," said the invalid, raising her eyes to heaven, and she folded her arms and began to mutter incoherently: "Why is it so, why is it so? My God, my God!" she said, and the tears flowed still more violently.

She prayed long and fervently, but her bosom remained just as sick and sore; in the sky, in the fields, on the road, everything remained just as gray and dull; and that autumn mist neither denser, nor thinner, lay just as before over the mud of the road and over the roofs of the cottages,

and over the carriages and the sheepskins of the post-drivers who, conversing together with strong and merry voices, were oiling the wheels of the vehicles and putting fresh horses to.

II.

The carriage was ready, but the driver still delayed—he had entered the common room of the posting-station. It was hot, stuffy, dark, and oppressive in the post-station room, which smelt of people, baked bread, cabbage, and sheepskins. A good many post-drivers were in the living-room, the cook was busy about the stove, and on the -stove in sheepskins lay a sick man.

"Uncle Khveder, Uncle Khveder, I say," cried a (young fellow, a post-driver in a sheepskin pelisse and with his whip in his belt, entering the room and turning towards the sick man.

"What are you skulking about for, Fed'ka, eh?" asked one of the other drivers, "don't you know the carriage is waiting for you?"

"I wanted to ask him for his boots as mine are busted," replied the fellow, throwing back his hair and thrusting his gantlet gloves into his girdle; "hie, Uncle Khveder, are you asleep?" he repeated, marching up to the stove.

"What is it?" sounded a faint voice, and a thin, red-bearded face peeped over the stove. A broad, bleached, and wasted hand, covered with hair, with an effort drew an *armyak* over a skinny shoulder, hardly hidden by a muddy shirt. "Give me a drink, brother! What's the matter?"

The young fellow brought him a pitcher full of water. "Look now, Teddy," said he, after a pause, "you won't want these new boots of yours any more now, give 'em to me. You won't walk about any more now, will you?"

The sick man bent his weary head over the glazed pitcher and, moistening his sparse pendent mustaches in the dark water, drank feebly and greedily. His touzled beard was not clean, his sunken, turbid eyes raised themselves with difficulty to the young fellow's face. On withdrawing from the water he wanted to raise his arm in order to wipe dry his moist lips but could not, and dried them on the sleeve of his *armyak*[1] instead. In silence, and breathing heavily through his nose, he looked straight into the eyes of the young fellow, rallying all his strength.

"You haven't promised them to anyone else, have you?" said the youth, "it doesn't much matter. The main thing is, it's mucky out of doors and I've work to do, so I said to myself : ' Just ask Teddy for his boots, he won't want 'em any more, anyhow.' Now, say yourself : what good are they to you? " Something in the sick man's breast overflowed and buzzed, he bent over and gave himself up to a throaty coughing fit which he could not rid himself of. " Yes, indeed, what good are they to you ? " angrily and unexpectedly croaked the cook, her voice filled the room: "you haven't stirred from the stove this month and more, you know you're gone all to pieces ; why, your inside is all wrong, didn't you hear it just now? What does he want with new boots, he won't be buried in them, I suppose } And it's high time I think for you to pray the Lord to forgive you your sins. You're gone all to pieces I say. You can't take him from one room to another or anywhere else. I hear there are hospitals in town, but what's the good of that? — every corner is occupied, and he's about done for. There's no room for you, anyhow, and besides, they like to have clean folks." " Hello, Serega ! take your place, the gentlefolks are waiting ! " the voice of the post-station starosta shouted in at the door. Serega would have gone out without waiting for an answer, but he could see by the eyes of the sick man all the time he was coughing that he

[1] A blouse of camel's hair.

wanted to say something. “ You may take the boots, Serega ! “ said he, suppressing the cough and breathing a little more freely, “ but listen ! buy me a head-stone when I die,” he added hoarsely.

“Thanks, uncle! Then I may take them, eh? And a head-stone, eh ? Yes, yes, I’ll buy one for you.” “ There, you hear what he says, my children ? “ the sick man was able to bring out, and then he bent down again, stifled by a recurring cough. “Yes, it’s a bargain, we have heard,” said one of the drivers. “ Come, Serega, take your seat,” said the starosta, looking in again, “ Lady Shirkinskaya is ill, you know.” Serega quickly divested himself of his big, worn- out, bulgy boots, and pitched them under a bench. The new boots of Uncle Khveder fitted him at the first try on, and Serega, glancing down at them as he departed, went out to the carriage. “ Those are something like boots ; let me give them a polish,” said the driver, with the polishing-brush in his hands, as Serega, mounting on to the box, took the reins. “ Did you get ‘em for nothing? “ “ Looks like, doesn’t it? “ replied Serega, standing up and arranging the folds of his yarmak round his legs. “ And now, off you go, my beauties ! “ he cried to the horses, cracking his whip, and the carriage and the calesche with their passengers, trunks, and baggage, vanished in the gray autumn mist, rolhng quickly along the wet road. The sick driver remained in the stufFy room on the stove, and without cotighing his cough out, with cin effort turned upon the other side and was quiet. People came in and went out of the room and had their meals in the room till evening, and all that time the sick man did not utter a sound. At nightfall the cook came to the stove, and pulled out the *tulup*[2] from beneath his legs.

“Don’t be angry, Nastasia,” muttered the sick man, “but I beg of you to let me have your corner.”

“All right, all right! Of course! what does it matter!” growled Nastasia, “but tell me, uncle, where does it hurt you?”

“All my inside is queer. God knows what’s the matter.”

“Never mind! Does your throat hurt you when you cough?”

“I ache all over. I’m going to die, that’s what it is; oh, oh, oh!” groaned the sick man.

“Cover up your feet, that’s what you’ve got to do,” said Nastasia, coming down from the stove and spreading the *yarmak* over him on her way down.

During the night the night-lamp faintly lit the room. Nastasia and ten of the drivers slept on the floor or on benches, snoring loudly. Only the sick man feebly moaned, coughed, and turned from side to side upon the stove. By the morning he was quite still.

“I had such an odd dream last night,” said the cook, stretching herself in the dim half-light of dawn, next morning; “it seemed to me as if I saw Uncle Khveder come down from the stove and go out to chop wood. ‘How can I help you, Nassy?’ says he, and I said to him, ‘Why don’t you go out and chop wood?’ So he takes up the chopper and begins to chop wood, chopping it so quickly that the splinters flew about in every direction. ‘Why, how’s this?’ says I ; ‘ you were so ill’ ‘ No,’ says he, ‘ I am well,’ and as he kept moving his hands, a great terror fell upon me, and I shrieked and awoke. He can’t be dead, surely? Uncle Khveder, Uncle Khveder, I say!” But no sound came from Theod’ore. “ Surely he’s not dead ? Let’s go and see ! “ said one of the drowsy drivers half awake. The wasted hand, hanging down from the stove and covered with reddish hair, was cold and white. “ Go and tell the inspector ! He seems to be dead,” said the driver. Theodore had no kinsfolk — he had outlived them all. Next day they buried him in the new church- yard behind

[2] A sheepskin pelisse.

the wood ; and for the next few days Nastasia kept telling everyone of the strange vision she had seen and how she had been the first to miss Uncle Theodore.

III.

Spring had come. In the wet streets of the town, among the frozen manure-heaps gurgled scurrying streamlets ; the colors of the garments and the con- versation of the people moving about the town were bright and cheerful. In the little gardens behind the fences the buds of the trees were biursting forth, and their branches were rocked almost audibly by the fresh breezes. There was a universal thaw, a constant dripping of transparent drops. The sparrows were chirping tumultuously and darting about on their tiny wings. On the sunny side of the road, behind fences, in town houses and country houses, everything was light and motion. In the sky, on the eaxth, and in the heart of man, youth and happiness revived. In one of the principal streets, in front of a gentle- man's mansion, fresh straw had been laid down ; in the house was that selfsame dying invalid who had been so eager to go abroad. At the closed doors of the bedchamber stood the husband of the invalid and a portly woman. On the divain sat a priest with dejected eyes, holding some- thing wrapped up in an epitrachilion. In a large arm-chair in a corner lay an old woman, the mother of the invalid, weeping convulsively. By her side stood a maid holding in her hand a clean pocket- handkerchief, and waiting till the old woman asked for it; another maid was rubbing the old woman's temples with something or other, and blowing under her cap among her gray hairs. "Well, Christ be with you, my friend," said the husband to the stout woman standing by his side at the door (his wife's sister), " she has such confidence in you ; you know how to talk to her, you see, so go in and persuade her nicely, my dear." He would have opened the door for her there and then, but the sister prevented him, at the same time dabbing her eyes with her handkerchief and shaking her head. " Well, I don't look now as if I had been crying," said she, and, opening the door herself, she went in. The husband was violently agitated, and seemed quite distraught. He made his way towards the old woman, but before he had taken more than a few paces, he turned back, walked across the room and approached the priest. The priest looked up at him, raised his brows to heaven and sighed. His thick, grizzled beard rose aloft and sank down again simultaneously.

"My God! my God!" said the husband.

"What's to be done?" said the priest sighing, and again his brows and his beard rose and fell.

"And her mother there!" said the husband desperately. "It is more than she can bear. How she did love her ... ! *I* don't know *what* to do. You, my father, do try and quiet her and induce her to go away from here."

The priest got up and went to the old woman.

"A mother's heart!—ah! who can estimate its love? yet God is merciful," said he.

The old woman's face suddenly became overcast and she began to sob.

"God is merciful," repeated the priest when she had grown a little calmer. "I may also tell you that in my parish there was a sick woman much worse than Maria Dmitrievna, and what do you think?—a simple shopkeeper cured her by means of herbs in a short time. And this same shopkeeper is now in Moscow. I was telling Vasily Dmitrievich that we might try the experiment. At any rate, it might afford the patient relief. With God all things are possible."

“No, she won’t live!” interrupted the old woman. “What will become of me if God takes her?” And she gave way to such passionate emotion that she lost consciousness.

The husband of the invalid covered his face with his hands and rushed out of the room. The first person he met in the corridor outside was his Httle lad, six years of age, chasing his little sister, and full of the spirit of the thing. “ What ! Didn’t they tell you to bring the children to mama?” he asked the nurse. “ No, she didn’t want to see them.” The little lad stopped for one instant, gazed intently at his father’s face, suddenly kicked out his foot, and with a merry cry ran on further. “ She’s pretending to be my little black horse,” shrieked the lad, pointing at his little sister. Meanwhile, in the other roo’m, the sister was sitting by the side of the invalid, and, by means of an art- fully prepared conversation, was endeavoring to prepare her for the thought of death. The doctor was mixing a draft at the other window. The invalid, in a white dressing-gown, and propped up all round with pillows, was sitting up in bed and looking at her sister in silence. “Ah, my friend,” she cried, suddenly interrupting her, “ don’t prepare me ! Oon’t take me for a child. I’m a Christian woman, I know all about it. I know I have not long to live. I know that if my husband had listened to me sooner I should now have been in Italy, and possibly — nay, certainly — ^would have been quite well. They all told him so. But what are we to do if God wills it so? We have all a great many sins to answer for, I know that ; but I trust in God’s mercy to forgive us all— I am sure He will forgive us all. I try to understand myself, and” I know I have many sins to answer for, my friend. But then, what a lot I have suffered ! I try to endure my sufferings patiently.” “ Then let me send for the little father, my friend, it will be still easier for you to communicate,” said the sister. The invalid inclined her head by way of assent. “ God forgive me — a sinner ! “ — she murmured. The sister went out and beckoned to the little father. “ She is an angel,” she said to the husband with tears in her eyes. The husband began to weep, the priest passed through the door, the old woman still remained un- conscious, and everything in the antechamber was perfectly quiet. In about five minutes the priest came out of the door again, and, taking off the epitrachilion, smoothed his hair. “ Thank God she is calmer now,” said he, “ she wants to see you all.” The sister and the husband went in. The invalid was weeping softly and looking at the holy image. “ I congratulate you, my friend,” said the husband. “ I thank you. How well it is with me now, what an inexpressible joy I feel,” said the invalid, and a light smile played upon her thin lips. “ How merciful God is ! — is He not ? He is merciful and almighty.” And with an eager prayer on her lips and streaming eyes, she again gazed upon the holy image. Suddenly something seemed to occur to her, she beckoned to her husband to draw near.

“You never will do what I ask you,” said she with a weak and querulous voice. The husband, extending his neck, listened humbly. “What is it, my friend?” “ How many times haven’t I said that these doctors know nothing-? It is the simple medicines that really cure… The little father has just been saying — there’s a shopkeeper … Send ! “ “For whom, my friend?” “ My God, you will understand nothing,” and the sick woman frowned and closed her eyes. The doctor came up and took her hand’. The pulse was plainly beating feebler and feebler. He beckoned to the husband. The invalid observed the gesture and looked round her in terror. The sister turned aside and wept. “ Don’^t weep, don’t torture yourself and me ! “ said the invalid — “ it deprives me of the little calmr ness I have left.” “You are an angel,” said the sister, kissing her hand. “ No, no, kiss me here ! … it is only coipses whose hands we kiss! My God, my God! “ That same evening the invalid was already a corpse, and the corpse was placed upon a bier in the saloon of that large house. In

that large apartment, with closed doors, sat a solitary *D'yachok*[3] singing in cadence through his nose the Psalms of David. The bright light from the wax-candles on the large silver candelabra fell on the white forehead of the defunct, on her heavy waxen hands, on the stone-stiff folds of the pall, and on the frightfully prominent knees and toes. The TJyachok, without imderstanding what he was saying, went on reciting in a deliberately measured tone, and in that silent chamber the words sounded and died away strangely. Now and then, from a distant room, came flying the sound of childish voices and childish uproar. " When Thou hidest Thy Face they are troubled," saith the Psalter ; " when Thou takest away their breath they die and return again to their dust When Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit they arise and renew the face of the Earth. And the Glory of the Lord shall endure for ever." The face of the defunct was solemn and majestic The pure cold forehead, the firmly-closed lips, were motionless. She was all attention. But did she understand even then those sublime words .'

IV.

In a month's time a marble monument was erected over the tomb of the deceased. The grave of the post-driver was still without its head-stone, and only the bright green grass had covered the little mound which served as the sole sign of the existence of a man who had passed away. " Great will be your sin, Serega, if you do not buy a stone for Khveder," said the cook more than once. "You've been saying winter's time enough, winter's time enough, and even now you haven't kept your word. It was all said and done at my place remember."

"Well, and have I said I wouldn't?" answered Serega. " I'll buy a stone as I said I would ; I'll buy a stone I say if I pay a ruble and a half for it I have not forgotten that it must be put up. Whenever I've occasion to go to town I'll buy it." " You might, at any rate, put up a cross ! " put in an old driver, " it's downright bad of you — ^why, you're still wearing the boots ! " " Where shall I get a cross from? — you can't hew it without a log." " Can't hew it without a log, eh ? A nice excuse ! Take an ax, go into the wood early, and then you'll hew it out easily enough ! Cut down a young aspen, and that'll give you a *golubets*[4] right enough." Early in the morning, when day had scarce begun to dawn, Serega took his ax and went out into the wood. Over everything lay a cold, whitish covering of still- falling dew, unillximinated by the sun. The east was brightening imperceptibly, and its feeble light was reflected on the fine passing clouds suspended in the vault of heaven. Not a single blade of grass below, not a single leaf on the high branches of the trees was astir. Only the rarely audible flutter of little wings in the thickest part of the forest, or a rustling on the ground disturbed the silence of the wood. Suddenly, a sound strange to Nature arose, and then died away again on the border of the forest But again this sound arose, and began to be repeated at regular intervals on the ground below, around the trunk of one of the motionless trees. Next the crown of one of the trees began to shiver unusually, its sappy leaves began to whisper something, and a wagtail sitting on one of its branches, took a hop or two, and then, waving its tail, hopped, with a faint piping cry, on to the next tree. The ax below gave forth a deeper and deeper soimd, sappy white chips began to fly about on the dewy grass, and a light cracking sound followed hard upon the blows. The whole body of the tree trembled, bent forward, and quickly righted itself again, tottering fearfully to its very roots. For an instant

[3] A church singer.

[4] A grave cross, with a covering over it.

all was quiet, but again the tree stooped forward a little ; the cracking in its trunk was again audible, and, smashing its branches and shedding abroad its twigs, it crashed down forwards on to the damp earth. The sounds of the ax and the footsteps ceased. The wagtail whistled again, and hopped a little higher. The branch to which it had been clinging rocked to and fro for a time, and then died like the rest with all its leaves. The other trees stood forth more beauteously and joyfully than ever, with ;, their motionless branches in this new free space.

The first rays of the sun penetrating the transparent clouds lit up the heavens, and rapidly traversed earth and sky. The misty billows began to overflow the valleys, the glistening dew played upon the green foliage and herbage, transparent whitening clouds ran in haste across the blue vault of heaven. The birds swarmed restlessly in the depths of the forest, and, as if beside themselves, kept twittering delightfully; the sappy leaves whispered joyously and calmly on the tree-tops, and the branches of the living trees gravely, sublimely, rustled over the dead body of the fallen tree.

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