

THE DIARIES OF  
SOFIA TOLSTOY

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THE DIARIES OF  
SOFIA TOLSTOY

TRANSLATED BY CATHY PORTER



ALMA BOOKS



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I

*Diaries*

1862–1910



## 1862

*Tsar Alexander II's emancipation of the serfs the previous year ushers in the "era of great reforms" – of law courts, the army and local government.*

*On 23rd September, Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy and Sofia Behrs are married in Moscow, and move immediately to Tolstoy's estate at Yasnaya Polyana, near Tula. December to February 1863, the Tolstoys visit Moscow to see his novel *The Cossacks* published.*

*8th October.* My diary again. It's sad to be going back to old habits I gave up since I got married. I used to write when I felt depressed – now I suppose it's for the same reason.

Relations with my husband have been so simple these past two weeks and I felt so happy with him; he was my diary and I had nothing to hide from him.

But ever since yesterday, when he told me he didn't trust my love, I have been feeling terrible. I know why he doesn't trust me, but I don't think I shall ever be able to say or write what I really think. I always dreamt of the man I would love as a completely whole, new, *pure* person. In these childish dreams, which I find hard to give up, I imagined that this man would always be with me, that I would know his slightest thought and feeling, that he would love nobody but me as long as he lived, and that he, like me and unlike others, would not have to sow his wild oats before becoming a respectable person.

Since I married I have had to recognize how foolish these dreams were, yet I cannot renounce them. The whole of my husband's past is so ghastly that I don't think I shall ever be able to accept it.\* Unless I can discover other interests in my life, like the children I long for, since they will give me a firm future and show me what real purity is, without all the abominations of his past and everything else that makes me so bitter towards my husband. He cannot understand that his past is another world to me, with thousands of different feelings, good and bad, which can never belong to me, just as his youth, squandered on God knows what or whom, can never be mine either. I am giving him everything; not one part of me has been wasted elsewhere. Even my childhood belonged to him. My fondest memories are of my first

childish love for him, and it is not my fault if this love was destroyed. He had to fritter away his life and strength, he had to experience so much evil before he could feel anything noble; now his love for me seems to him something strong and good – but only because it's such a long, long time since he lived a good life as I do. There are bad things in my past too, but not so many as in his.

He loves to torment me and see me weep because he doesn't trust me. He wishes I had lived as evil a life as him, so that I might more fully appreciate goodness. It irritates him that happiness has come so easily to me, and that I accepted him without hesitation or remorse. But I have too much self-respect to cry. I don't want him to see me suffer; let him think it's easy for me. Yesterday while Grandfather was here I went downstairs especially to see him and was suddenly overwhelmed by an extraordinary feeling of love and strength. At that moment I loved him so much I longed to go up to him; but then I felt the moment I touched him I shouldn't feel so happy – almost like a sacrilege. But I never shall or can let him know what is going on within me. I have so much foolish pride – the slightest hint that he misunderstands or mistrusts me throws me into despair. What is he doing to me? Little by little I shall withdraw completely from him and poison his life. Yet I feel so sorry for him at those times when he doesn't trust me; his eyes fill with tears and his face is so gentle and sad. I could smother him with love at those moments, and yet the thought haunts me: "He doesn't *trust* me, he doesn't *trust* me." Today I began to feel we were drifting further and further apart. I am creating my own world for myself and he is making himself a practical life filled with distrust. And I thought how vulgar this kind of relation was. And I began to distrust his love too. When he kisses me I am always thinking, "I am not the first woman he has loved." It hurts me so much that my love for him – the dearest thing in the world to me because it is my first and last love – should not be enough for him. I too have loved other men, but only in my imagination – whereas he has loved and admired so many women, all so pretty and lively, all with different faces, characters and souls, just as he now loves and admires me. I know these thoughts are petty and vulgar but I can't help it, it is his past that is to blame. I can't forgive God for making men *sow their wild oats* before they can become decent people. And I can't help feeling hurt that my husband should come into this common category of person. And then he thinks I don't love him. Why would I care so much about him if I didn't love him? Why else would I try to understand his past and his present, and what may

interest him in the future? It's hopeless – how can a wife prove her love to a husband who tells her he married her only because he *had* to, even though she never loved him? As if I had ever, for one moment, regretted my past, or could dream of not loving him. Does he enjoy seeing me cry when I realize how difficult our relations are, and how we shall gradually drift further apart spiritually? Toys for the cat are tears for the mouse. But this toy is fragile, and if he breaks it, it will be he who cries. I cannot bear the way he is wearing me down. Yet he is a wonderful, good person. He too loathes everything evil, he cannot bear it. I used to love everything beautiful, my soul knew the meaning of ecstasy – now all that has died in me. No sooner am I happy than he crushes me.

*9th October.* Yesterday we opened our hearts and I feel much better. We went horse riding today, which was splendid, but I feel downcast all the same. I had a depressing dream last night and it is weighing on me, although I don't remember it in detail. I thought of Maman today and grew dreadfully sad, but I don't regret my past, I shall always bless it, for I have known great happiness. My husband seems much calmer now and I think he trusts me again, God willing. It's true, I realize I do not make him very happy. I seem to be asleep all the time and unable to wake up. If I did, I am sure I would be a completely different person, but I don't know how. *Then* he would realize how much I love him, for I should be able to *tell* him of my love. I should be able to see into his soul as I used to, and know how to make him happy again. I must wake up at once, I must. I am frightened of being on my own. He won't let me into his room, which makes me very sad. All physical things disgust him.

*11th October.* I am terribly sad, and am withdrawing further and further into myself. My husband is ill and out of sorts and doesn't love me. I expected this, but never imagined it would be so terrible. He grows colder and colder every day, while I love him more and more. His coldness will soon be unbearable to me. Of course, he is much too honest to deceive me. If he doesn't love me he would never pretend to do so, but when he does love me I can see it in his every movement. Lyovochka is a wonderful man, and I feel everything is my fault, yet I am afraid to show him how sad I am for I know how bored men are by foolish melancholy. I used to console myself that it would pass and everything would be all right again, but now I feel things will never get better and will become a great deal worse. Papa writes

to me: "Your husband loves you passionately." It's true, he did love me *passionately*, but passion passes, and what nobody realized is that he was attracted to me without loving me. Why have I ruined this dear man whom everybody loves so much?

"You'll be happy, you'll see," people used to tease me. "Don't worry so much!" Now I have lost everything, all my energy for work, life and household tasks has been wasted, and I want only to sit in silence all day, thinking bitter thoughts. I wanted to do some work, but couldn't; why should I dress up in that stupid bonnet which makes my head ache? I long to play the piano but it's so awkward; upstairs you can be heard all over the house and downstairs the piano is too bad to play. I can hear him now playing a piano duet upstairs with Olga. Poor man, he is always looking for something to divert him and take him away from me. What is the point of living?

*13th November.* An unlucky date. But I have spoken to him, and like a true egoist, I always feel much better after I have had him in my room and set my mind at rest.

It is true, I cannot find anything to occupy me. He is fortunate because he is talented and clever. I am neither. One cannot live by love alone, but I am too stupid to do anything but sit and think about him. He has only to feel slightly under the weather and I think, "What if he dies?" and these hideous thoughts make me wretched for the next three hours. When he is cheerful, I worry only that this mood will pass and can think of nothing else. Whenever he is away or busy I think of him constantly, listening out for him or watching the expression on his face. It's probably because I am pregnant that I am in such an abnormal state; it affects him too I know. It's not hard to find work, there's plenty to do, but first you have to enjoy breeding hens, tinkling on the piano, reading a lot of fourth-rate books and precious few good ones and pickling cucumbers. I am sure all this will come once I've forgotten my idle girlhood ways and grown used to living in the country. I am waiting for that bright day when things run as smoothly as a machine and I can start to live an active life. I am asleep now, nothing brings me excitement or joy – neither the trip to Moscow, nor the thought of the baby. I wish I could take some remedy to wake me up.

I haven't prayed for a long time. Before, I used to love the external aspects of religious ritual. When nobody was looking I would light a wax candle before the icon, put some flowers there, lock the door, kneel on the floor and pray for hours. It seems silly and ridiculous,

but I love remembering it. My life is so serious now. Over the next few years I shall make myself a serious *female* world, and love it even more than the old one because it will contain my husband and my children, whom one loves more than one's parents and brothers and sisters. But I haven't settled down yet. I still swing between my past and my future. My husband loves me too much to tell me how to live my life; besides, it's difficult, it's something I must work out for myself. He too feels I have changed. With patience I shall be as I used to be, although no longer a young girl but a woman; I shall wake up then, and both of us will be happy.

*23rd November.* He disgusts me with his talk of the "people". I feel it's either me, representing his family, or the people, whom he loves so passionately. If this is selfish, so be it. I live through him and want him to live for me, otherwise I feel suffocated in this place. Today I ran out of the house because everyone and everything disgusted me – Auntie,\* his peasant students, the walls, life. I slipped out and ran off alone, and wanted to laugh and shout for joy. L. no longer disgusted me, but I suddenly realized how far apart we were: his "people" could never absorb all my attention, and I could never fully absorb his as he does mine. If I don't interest him, if he sees me as a doll, merely his *wife*, not a human being, then I will not and cannot live like that.\* Of course I am idle at present, but I am not so by nature; I simply haven't discovered anything I can do. He gets angry. Let him, I feel happy and free today because I am on my own, and although he has been very morose he has left me alone, thank God. I know he has a brilliant mind, he is poetic and intelligent and has many talents, but it makes me angry that he sees only the gloomy side of things. He has been so gloomy these days I could have wept. He won't talk to me. It's terrible to live with him – he'll get carried away by his love for the common people again and I shall be done for, because he loves me merely as he used to love his school, nature, the people, maybe his writing, all of which he loved a little, one after the other, until it was time for something new. Aunt came in and asked why I had run out and where I had been, and I wanted to needle her and said I was "escaping from the students, for she always defends them. But it wasn't true. I'm not the least bit angry with the students, it's only old habit that makes me grumble and complain like this. I went out simply because I was bored with doing nothing. I shall go and play the piano now. He is in the bath. He is a stranger to me today.

*16th December.* One of these days I think I shall kill myself with jealousy. "In love as never before!" he writes. With that fat, pale peasant woman – how frightful!\* I looked at the dagger and the guns with such joy. One blow, I thought, how easy it would be – if only it weren't for the baby. Yet to think she is there, just a few steps away. I feel demented. I shall go for a drive. I may even see her. So he really did love her! I should like to burn his diary and the whole of his past.

I have returned and am feeling worse; my head aches, I am distraught, my heart is heavy. I felt free outside in the open air – if only I could always breathe as freely as that. But life is so petty. Love is hard – when you love it takes your breath away, you lay down your life and soul for it and it's with you as long as you live. It would be narrow and mean, this little world of mine, if it weren't for him. Yet it's impossible for us to join together our two worlds. He is so intelligent, he has such energy, and then there is that dreadful, endless past of his. And mine is so small and insignificant. I felt terrified today by the thought of our journey to Moscow, for I shall become even more insignificant there. I have been reading the openings of some of his works, and the very mention of love or women makes me feel so disgusted and depressed I would gladly burn everything.

If I could kill him and create a new person exactly the same as he is now, I would do so happily.

## 1863

*28th June – birth of the couple's son, Sergei. Shortly afterwards Tolstoy talks of going to war (possibly to put down the Polish uprising against Russian domination). But instead he starts on War and Peace. Summer – Sofia's seventeen-year-old sister Tanya Behrs visits Yasnaya Polyana and embarks on a romance with Tolstoy's brother Sergei, twenty years her senior.*

*9th January.* Never in my life have I felt so wretched with remorse.\* Never did I imagine I could be so much to blame. I have been choked with tears all day, and am afraid to talk to him or look at him. I love him deeply, he has never been so precious to me, and I feel so worthless and loathsome. Yet he is not even angry and still loves me, and his face is so gentle and saintly. A man like this could make one die of humility. Mental pain has made me physically ill. I thought I would miscarry, I was in such pain. I have been praying all day, trying to lighten my crime and undo what I have done. I feel a little easier when he isn't here, for then I can cry and love him. When he is here my conscience tortures me; it's agony to see his sweet face, which I have avoided looking at since yesterday evening. How could I have treated him so badly? I have racked my brains for some way of making amends for that stupid word – or not so much make amends as make myself a better person for him. I cannot love him any more than I already do. I already love him to such excess, with all my heart and soul, that there is nothing in my mind but my love for him, nothing. There is absolutely no evil in him, nothing I could ever dream of reproaching him for.

*11th January.* I am calmer now because he is being a little kinder to me. But my unhappiness is still so fresh that every memory of it brings on a terrible physical pain in my head and body – I feel it passing through my veins and nerves.

He saw this diary but hasn't referred to it, I don't know if he has read it. It was vile and I have no desire to reread it.

I am alone and afraid, which is why I wanted to write sincerely and at length, but fear has confused my thoughts. I am afraid of being

frightened now that I'm pregnant. My jealousy is a congenital illness, or maybe in loving him I have nothing else to love; I've given myself so completely to him that my only happiness is with him and I am afraid of losing him, as old men fear to lose an only child on whom their whole life depends. People always told me I wasn't egotistical, although this is really the most complete egotism. But I love him so much that this too will pass. Only I shall need a lot of patience and strength of will, otherwise it will be no good. There are days when I am morbidly in love with him, and this is one of those days. It is always so when I have done something wrong. It hurts me to look at him, listen to him or be with him, like a devil in the presence of a saint.

*14th January (Moscow).*\* I am alone again and sad. Yet we have managed to make peace. I don't know what reconciled him to me or me to him, it happened of itself. All I know is that I have my happiness back. I want to go home. I have so many dreams of how I will live in Yasnaya with *him*. I feel sad to have broken so completely from the Kremlin crowd. I see terribly clearly how much my world has changed, yet I love my family more than ever, especially Maman, and it saddens me that I'm no longer part of their lives. I live completely through him and for him, and it's often painful for me to realize that I am not *everything* to him and that if I were suddenly to die he would be able to console himself somehow, for he has so many *resources*, whereas I have such a weak nature. I have given myself to one man and would never be able to find another world for myself.

Life in this hotel depresses me. I am happy only when I am sitting with my family, and with *Lyovochka*, of course. I could leave for home at once I know, it's largely up to me, but I haven't the heart to say goodbye to my family so soon after arriving, and I'm too lazy to move. I had such a bad dream last night. Our Yasnaya peasant girls and women were visiting us in a huge garden, all dressed up as ladies, then started going off somewhere, one after the other. A.\* came last, wearing a black silk dress. I began speaking to her and was seized with such violent rage that I picked up her child and began tearing him to pieces. I tore off his head and legs – I was like a madwoman. Then *Lyovochka* came up and I told him they would send me to Siberia, but he picked up the legs and arms and all the other bits and told me it was only a doll. I looked down and saw that it was indeed, with just cloth and stuffing for a body. And that made me furious.

I often torture myself thinking about her, even here in Moscow. Maman was right when she said I had become sillier than ever – rather, I think my mind is lazier. It’s an unpleasant feeling, this physical lethargy. And physical lethargy produces mental lethargy too.

I regret my former liveliness. But I think it will return. I feel it would have as good an effect on Lyovochka as it once had on the Kremlin crowd.

*17th January.* I’ve been feeling angry that he loves everything and everyone, when I want him to love only me. Now that I’m alone in my room I realize I was just being wilful again; it’s his kindness and the wealth of his feelings that make him good. The cause of all my whims and miseries is this wretched egotism of mine, which makes me want to possess his life, his thoughts, his love, everything he has. This has become a sort of rule with me. The moment I think fondly of someone I tell myself no, I love only Lyovochka. But I absolutely *must* learn to love something else as he loves his *work*, so I can turn to it when he grows cold towards me. These times will become more frequent. I see this clearly now – why should Lyovochka study all the subtleties of our relations as I do, for want of anything else to occupy me? From this I also learn how I should behave with him, and I do this not as a duty but quite involuntarily. I can’t yet put this knowledge into practice, but everything comes in time. We must get back to Yasnaya very soon; there he devotes himself more to me, for there is nobody else but Aunt and me. I know I can make the house a happier place, as long as he doesn’t want visitors, for I don’t know where I would find the right people to ask, and besides I don’t like them. But if he wants me to I’ll entertain whomever he cares to invite; anything to keep him happy and not bored, for then he’ll love me and there’s nothing else I want.

I waited and waited for him and have now sat down again to write. Some people live in solitude, but it’s terrible to be alone. I don’t suppose we shall go to that lecture now. Perhaps I annoyed him. This thought often torments me. I have grown terribly close to Maman and it frightens me, for we can never live together now.

*29th January.* Kremlin life is oppressive; it evokes the lazy, aimless life I led here as a girl. All my illusions about the aims and duties of marriage vanished into thin air when Lyovochka let me know that one can’t be satisfied merely with one’s family, one’s husband or wife, but needs something more, a larger cause. (“*I need nothing but*

you. *Lyovochka talks a lot of nonsense sometimes.*" [L.N. Tolstoy's note])

*3rd March (Yasnaya Polyana).* Still the same old story – writing on my own. But I'm not lonely now, I'm used to it. And happy in the knowledge that he loves me, and loves me constantly. When he gets home he comes up to me so kindly and asks me or tells me something. My life is cheerful and easy now. I read *his* diary and it made me happy.\* There is me and his work – nothing else matters to him. Yesterday and today he has been preoccupied. I am afraid to disturb him when he is writing, and that he'll get angry and my presence will be unbearable to him. I'm glad he's writing. I wanted to go to church this morning, but instead I stayed at home and prayed here. Since my marriage every form of ceremony has become loathsome to me. I long with all my heart to manage the household and *do* something. But I haven't yet learnt how, I don't know how to go about it. It will come in time.

*1st April.* I am unwell and in low spirits. Lyova has gone off again. My misfortune is that I have no inner resources to draw on, and this is indeed necessary and important in life. The weather is wonderful, it's almost summer, and my mood is like the summer – sad. It's bleak and lonely here. He has his work and the estate to think about while I have nothing... What am I good for? I can't go on living like this. I would like to *do* more, something *real*. At this wonderful time of year I always used to long for things, aspire to things, dream about God knows what. But I no longer have these foolish aspirations, for I know I have all I need now and there's nothing left to strive for. So much happiness and so little to do.

*6th April.* We have started attending to the estate together, he and I, him taking it all very seriously, me so far pretending to. But it interests me greatly. He seems preoccupied and unwell, and this makes me anxious. I'm afraid to let him know how much these blood rushes of his worry me. It's a terrible thought, but I can't help worrying that this life of ours and our happiness together is not real happiness at all but just a trick of fate, and will suddenly be snatched away. I'm afraid... It's stupid, but I cannot write it down. I wish this fear would pass quickly, for it poisons my life. He has bought some bees, which pleases me very much; managing the estate is interesting, but hard work. He certainly has something on his mind; he's being so

unstraightfoward and secretive. Or is it just a headache? What's the matter with him? What does he want? I would do anything he wanted if only I could. He is out now, but I fear when he comes back he'll be in a bad temper and will find something to irritate him. I love him desperately, I feel I could endure anything for his sake if I had to.

*10th April.* He has gone to meet Papa in Tula and I already feel miserable. I have been rereading his letters to V.A.\* They seem so youthful. It wasn't her he loved but love itself and family life. I recognize him well – his moral precepts, his splendid strivings for all that is noble and *good*. What a wonderful man he is! And reading through these letters I almost stopped feeling jealous, as if it wasn't V. at all but *me*, the woman he *had* to love. I put myself into their world. She was apparently rather a pretty girl, essentially empty-headed, morally good and lovable only because she was so young, while he was just as he is now, not really in love with V. so much as with his love of life and goodness. Poor man, he was still too young to realize that you can never plan happiness in advance, and will inevitably be unhappy if you try. But what noble, splendid dreams these were.

*24th April.* Lyova is either old or unhappy. He seems to think of nothing but money, the estate and the distillery – nothing else interests him.\* If he isn't eating, sleeping or sitting in silence he is roaming about the estate alone the whole day. And I am wretched and alone, always alone. He shows his love for me merely by kissing my hands in a mechanical fashion, and by being kind to me and not cruel.

*25th April.* The same wretchedness all morning, the same premonition of something terrible. I still feel very shy with him. I cried as if demented and afterwards couldn't understand why this was always happening – I knew only that I had good reason to cry, and even possibly to die, if he had stopped loving me as he used to. I didn't mean to write today, but I am all alone downstairs and have given in to my old habit of scribbling. I've been interrupted—

*29th April, evening.* I get annoyed about trifles – some parcels, for instance. I make great efforts not to be irritable, and shall soon achieve this. Towards Lyovochka I feel terribly affectionate and rather shy – a result of my petty moods. Towards myself I feel a disgust such as I haven't felt for a long time. I want to go out and look at the bees

and the apple trees and work on the estate.\* I want to be active, but I am heavy and tired, and my infirmity tells me to sit still and look after my stomach. It's infuriating. It distresses me that it should make him so unkind to me, as if it's my fault I am pregnant. I'm no help to him at present. And there is another thing which makes me disgusted with myself. (One must above all speak the truth in a diary.) It made me happy to recall the time when V.V.\* was in love with me. I wonder if it could make me happy if someone fell in love with me now? Oh, how loathsome. I always laughed at him then and never felt anything for him but contempt. Lyova ignores me more and more. The physical side of love is very important for him. This is terrible. For me it's quite the opposite.

*8th May.* My pregnancy is to blame for everything – I'm in an unbearable state, physically and mentally. Physically I'm always ill, mentally there is this awful emptiness and boredom. As far as Lyova is concerned I don't exist. I feel I am hateful to him, and want only to leave him in peace and cut myself out of his life as far as possible. I can do nothing to make him happy, because I'm pregnant. It's a cruel truth that a wife only discovers whether her husband really loves her when she is pregnant. He has gone to his beehives and I would give anything to go too but shan't, because I have been having palpitations and it's difficult to sit down there, and there'll be a thunderstorm any moment, and my head aches and I'm bored – I feel like weeping, and I don't want him to see me in this state, especially as he is ill too. I feel awkward with him most of the time. If he is occasionally kind to me it's more a matter of habit, and he still feels obliged to continue the old relations even though he doesn't love me any more. I'm sure it would be terrible for him to confess that he did once love me – not so long ago either – but all this is over now. If only he knew how much he has changed, if only he could step into my shoes for a while, he would understand how hard life is for me. But there's no help for it. He will wake up again after the baby is born, I suppose, for this is what always happens.

*9th May.* He promised to be here at twelve o'clock and now it's two. Has something happened? How can he take such pleasure in tormenting me? You don't drive out a dog that licks your hand. Maman endured a similar fate to mine in the first year of her marriage, only it was worse for her, for Papa was always travelling around visiting patients and playing cards, whereas Lyova merely walks around the estate. But I am

also lonely and bored, also pregnant and ill. You learn so much more from experience than from the intellect. Youth is a misfortune, not a blessing, if you are married. You simply cannot be happy sitting there sewing or playing the piano alone, completely *alone*, and gradually becoming convinced that even though your husband may not love you, you are stuck there for ever and there you must sit. Maman told me her life got happier as she grew older; when her youth passed and her children arrived and she found something to focus her life on. That is how it will be with me too. I am moody and bad-tempered only because I'm bored with waiting for him since twelve o'clock alone. It is wicked of him not to have pity on me, as any moderately decent person would have for another suffering fellow creature.

*6th June.* My brother Alexander and sister Tatyana have arrived to disturb our life and I'm sorry. They don't seem very cheerful. Or maybe it's just the chilly atmosphere here. They haven't cheered me up a bit, they've merely made me more anxious. I love Lyovochka intensely but it angers me that I should be in a relationship in which we're not equals. I am entirely dependent on him, and God knows I treasure his love. But he either takes mine for granted or doesn't need it, he seems to be alone in everything. I keep reminding myself that autumn will soon be here and all this will soon be over. I don't know what I mean by "all this", though. And what sort of winter we shall have – or whether there will be a winter at all – I cannot imagine. It's terribly depressing that I should wish for nothing and nothing makes me happy, like an old woman, and how unbearable it would be to be old. I didn't want to go for a drive with them after he said: "You and I are old folk, let's stay put." And it seemed such fun to stay at home with him, just the two of us, as though I had fallen in love with him against my parents' wishes. Now the others have driven off and he has gone out, and I am alone with my melancholy thoughts. I am angry with him for not giving me a carriage, which means I can never go out for a drive. It's much simpler for him to leave me on the sofa with a book and not bother his head about me. If I can stop being angry for a moment though, I realize he has a mountain of work which has nothing to do with me, and that running the estate is a gruelling labour; then there are the peasants visiting him all the time and never giving him a moment's peace. And there are those people who cheated him over the carriage, and it wasn't *his* fault – no, he is a *wonderful* man, I love him with all my heart.

*7th June.* I love him madly. This feeling has taken a hold over me and overwhelms me. He is on the estate all the time, but I am not moping now and I feel happy. And he loves me, I think I can sense that. I fear this means I shall die – how terrible it would be to leave him. The more I get to know him the dearer he becomes to me. I think each day that I have never loved him so much – and next day I love him even more. Nothing exists for me but him and everything that concerns him.

*14th July.* It's all over, the baby\* has been born and my ordeal is over. I have risen from my bed and am gradually entering into life again, but with a constant feeling of dread about my baby and especially my husband. Something in me seems to have collapsed, and I sense that whatever it is it will always be there to torment me; it's probably the fear of not doing my duty towards *my family*. I feel terribly timid with my husband, as if I had wronged him in some way. I feel I am a burden, a foolish person (the same old theme!), even rather vulgar. I am frightened by the womb's love for its offspring, and frightened by my somewhat unnatural love for my husband. All this I try to hide, out of a feeling of shame I know to be stupid and false. I sometimes comfort myself with the thought that most people see this love of one's husband and children as a virtue. I shall never go any further than this I fear, although I should like to be a bit better educated – my education was so bad – again if only for my husband's sake and that of my children. But how strong these maternal feelings are! It strikes me as quite natural and not at all strange that I am now a mother. He is Lyovochka's child, that's why I love him. His present state of mind makes me very anxious. He has such a wealth of ideas and feelings and it is all being wasted. I truly appreciate his great qualities. God knows I would give anything to make him happy.

*23rd July.* I have been married for ten months and my spirits are flagging. I automatically seek support as my baby seeks the breast, and I am in agonizing pain. Lyova is murderous. He cannot run the estate – I'm not cut out for it, he says. He is restless.\* Nothing here satisfies him; I know what he wants and I cannot give it to him. Nothing is sweet to me. Like a dog I have grown used to his caresses, but he has grown cold. I console myself that there are bound to be days like this. But they are all too frequent. *Patience.* I shall now go and sacrifice myself to my son...

*31st July.* What he says is so *banal*. I know things are terrible, but why should he be so angry? Whose fault is it? Our relations are frightful, and at such a painful time as this too. He has become so unpleasant that I try all day to avoid him. When he says, “I’m going to bed,” or “I’m going to have a bath,” I think, thank God. It breaks my heart to sit with my little son. God has taken both my husband and my son from me – to think how devoutly we used to pray to Him. Now I feel everything is over. Patience, I keep telling myself. We were at least blessed with a happy past. I have loved him so much and am grateful to him for everything. I have just been reading his diary. At that wonderful poetic moment everything seemed vile to him. “These past nine months have been practically the worst in my life,” he wrote – to say nothing of the tenth. How often he must secretly have asked himself why he got married. And how often he has said aloud to me, “What has become of my old self?”\*

*2nd August.* It was not written for me to read. Why am I idling my life away? You’d do well to pull yourself together, Sofia Andreevna. Grief like this can wear you down. I have sternly forbidden myself ever to mention his name again. Maybe it will pass.

*3rd August.* It has started raining and I’m afraid he’ll catch cold. I am not angry any more. I love him. God bless him.

*Sonya, forgive me, I have only just realized that I am to blame and have wronged you greatly. There are days when one seems guided not by one’s will but by some irresistible external law. That was why I treated you like that then – to think I could have done such a thing. I have always recognized that I have many failings and very little generosity of spirit. And now I have acted so cruelly, so rudely, and to whom? To the person who has given me the finest happiness of my whole life and who alone loves me. I know this can never be forgotten or forgiven, Sonya, but I know you better now and realize how meanly I treat you. Sonya darling, I know I have been vile – somewhere inside me there is a fine person, but at times he seems to be asleep. Love him, Sonya, and do not reproach him too much.*  
[L.N. Tolstoy’s note]

Lyovochka wrote that, begging my forgiveness, but then he lost his temper and crossed it out. He was talking of that terrible time when I had mastitis and my breasts hurt so much I was *unable* to feed

Seryozha, and this made him angry. It wasn't that I didn't *want* to – I longed to, it was what I wanted more than anything. I deserved those few lines of tenderness and remorse from him, but in a moment of rage with me he crossed them out as soon as I had read them.

*17th August.* I have been daydreaming, recalling those “mad” nights last year, and other mad nights too, when I was utterly free and in such a splendid state of mind. If ever I have known complete happiness it was then. I loved and experienced and understood everything, my mind and my being were completely in tune, and the world seemed so fresh. And then there was the dear poetic *Comte*,\* with his wonderful deep bright gaze. It was a heavenly time. I felt pampered by his love. I certainly must have felt it, otherwise I wouldn't have been so happy. I remember he was rude to me one evening when Popov\* was here and I was terribly hurt, but I pretended I didn't care and went out and sat on the porch with Popov, straining to hear what the *Comte* was talking about inside, while all the time pretending to be fascinated by everything Popov was saying. I grew even fonder of the *Comte* after that, and made a point of never dissembling to him again. I was just thinking about all this when I suddenly realized with incredulous joy that the *Comte* is now my husband. When he doubts my love for him I feel so stunned I lose my head. How can I prove it when I love him so *honestly*, so steadfastly?

*22nd September.* It will be a year tomorrow. Then I had hopes of happiness, now only of unhappiness. Before I thought it was all a joke, but now I realize he means it. So he is off to war.\* What sort of behaviour is that? Is he unbalanced? No, I think not, merely erratic. I don't know whether it's intentional, but he seems to do all he can to make me unhappy. He has put me in a position where I have to worry from one day to the next that he'll go off, and I'll be abandoned with my baby, maybe more than just one. It's all a joke to them, a fleeting fancy. One day they decide to get married, enjoy it and produce some children – next day it's time to leave them and go off to war. I only hope now that my child will die, for I shall not survive without him. I have no faith in his love for the “fatherland”, this *enthousiasme* in a man of thirty-five. Aren't his children also the fatherland, aren't they also Russian? But no, he wants to abandon them so he can enjoy himself galloping about on his horse, revelling in the beauties of battle and listening to the bullets fly. His inconsistency and cowardice have made me respect him less. But his talent is more important to

him than his family. If only he would explain to me the true motives of his desire. Why did I marry him? Valerian Petrovich\* would have been better, as I wouldn't have minded so much if he left me. What did he need my love for? It was just an infatuation. And I know he's blaming me, for now he is sulking. He blames me for loving him and not wanting him to die or leave me. Let him sulk. I only wish I had been able to prepare myself for it in advance, i.e. stop loving him, for the parting would have been easier. I love him, that's the worst of it, and when I see him he looks so depressed, forever morosely searching his soul.

*7th October.* What gloom. At least my son gives me some joy. But why is Nurse always fussing over baby clothes and distracting me? Of course he can see how low I feel, it's no use trying to conceal it, but he'll soon find it insufferable. I want to go to the ball, but that isn't the reason I feel low. I shan't go, but it irritates me that I still want to. And this irritation would have spoiled the fun, which I doubt it would have been anyway. He keeps saying, "I am being reborn." What *does* he mean? He can have everything he had before we were married, if only he can be rid of his terrible anxieties and restless strivings. "Reborn"? He says I'll soon understand. But I get flustered and cannot understand a word he is talking about. He is undergoing some great change. And we are becoming more estranged. My illness and the baby have taken me away from him, this is why I don't understand him. What else do I need? Am I not lucky to be close to these inexhaustible ideas, talents and virtues, all embodied in my husband? But it can be depressing too. It's my *youth*.\*

*17th October.* I wish I could understand him fully so he might treat me as he treats Alexandrine,\* but I know this is impossible, so I mustn't be offended and must accept that I am too young and silly and not poetic enough. To be like Alexandrine, quite apart from any innate gifts, one would need to be older anyway, childless, and even unmarried. I wouldn't mind at all if they took up their old correspondence, but it would sadden me if she thought his wife was fit for nothing but the nursery and humdrum superficial relationships. I know that however jealous I may be of her soul, I mustn't cut her out of his life, for she has played an important part in it for which I should have been useless. He shouldn't have sent her that letter.\* I cried because he didn't tell me everything he had written in it, and because he said, "Something which I alone know about myself. And I'll tell you too,

only my wife doesn't know anything about it..." I should like to know her better. Would she consider me worthy of him? She understands and appreciates him so well. I found some letters from her in his desk and they gave me a clear impression of what she was like, and of her relations with Lyova. One was particularly fine. Once or twice it has occurred to me to write to her without telling him, but I can't bring myself to. She interests me greatly and I like her a lot. Ever since I read his letters to her I have been thinking about her constantly. I think I could love her. I'm not pregnant, judging by my state of mind, and long may this continue. I love him to distraction, and it worries me to think I shall love him even more in the future.

*28th October.* My love cannot be very strong if I am so weak. But no, I love him terribly, there can be no doubt about it. If only I could raise myself up. My husband is so good, so wonderfully good. Where is he? Probably working on *The History of 1812*.<sup>\*</sup> He used to tell me about his writing, but now he thinks I'm not worthy of his confidence. In the past he shared all his thoughts with me, and we had such blissful, happy times together. Now they are all gone. "We shall always be happy, Sonya," he said. I feel so sad that he has had none of the happiness he expected and deserved.

*13th November.* I feel sorry for Aunt – she won't last much longer. She is always sick, her cough keeps her awake at night, her hands are thin and dry. I think about her all day.

He says, let's live in Moscow for a while. Just what I expected. It makes me jealous when he finds his ideal in the first pretty woman he meets. Such love is terrible because it is blind and virtually incurable. There has never been anything of this in me, and there never will be. I am left alone morning, afternoon and night. I am to gratify his pleasure and nurse his child, I am a piece of household furniture, I am a *woman*. I try to suppress all human feelings. When the machine is working properly it heats the milk, knits a blanket, makes little requests and bustles about trying not to think – and life is tolerable. But the moment I am alone and allow myself to think, everything seems insufferable. He doesn't love me, I couldn't keep his love. In a moment of grief, which I now regret, when nothing seemed to matter but the fact that I had lost his love, I thought even his writing was pointless. What did I care what Countess So-and-So in his novel said to Princess So-and-So? Afterwards I despised myself. My life is so mundane. But he has such a rich internal life,

talent and immortality. I have become afraid of him, and at times he is a complete stranger.

*19th December.* I've lit two candles, sat down at the table and I feel perfectly happy. Everything seems funny and unimportant. I feel like flirting, even with someone like Alyosha Gorshkoi,\* or losing my temper with a chair. I played cards with Aunt for four hours, which made him furious, but I didn't care. It hurts me to think of Tanya, she's a thorn in my flesh.\* But I have put even this out of my mind today. The baby is better, maybe *that's* why I am so happy. At this moment I should love to go to a *dance* or do something amusing. He is old and self-absorbed, and I am young and long to do something wild. I'd like to turn somersaults instead of going to bed. But with whom?

*24th December.* Old age hovers over me; everything here is old. I try to suppress all youthful feelings, for they seem out of place in this sombre environment. The only one who is younger in spirit than the others is his brother Seryozha,\* which is why I like it when he comes. I am gradually coming to the conclusion that Lyova wants only to restrain me; this is why he is so reserved, and why he constantly frustrates my spontaneous outbursts of love. How *can* I love him in this sober, sedate atmosphere? It's so monotonous here, so lacking in love. But I won't do anything. I complain as if I was really unhappy – but then I *am* really unhappy, for he doesn't love me so much. He actually told me so, but I knew it already. As for myself I'm not sure. I see so little of him and am in such awe of him that I can't be sure how much I love him. I dearly want to marry Tanya off to Seryozha, but it frightens me. What about Masha?\* All Lyova's pronouncements on the compartments of the heart are nothing but fanciful idealism and are no comfort to me.