

# VOLUME I





## Part One

### I

“*Eh bien, mon prince, Gênes et Lucques ne sont plus que des apanages, des estates, de la famille Buonaparte.*<sup>1</sup> Non, je vous prévient, que si vous ne me dites pas que nous avons la guerre, si vous vous permettez encore de pallier toutes les infamies, toutes les atrocités de cet Antichrist (ma parole, j’y crois)—je ne vous connais plus, vous n’êtes plus mon ami, vous n’êtes plus my faithful slave, *comme vous dites.* Well, good evening, good evening. *Je vois que je vous fais peur,* sit down and tell me about it.”\*

So spoke, in July 1805, the renowned Anna Pavlovna Scherer, maid of honour and intimate of the empress Maria Feodorovna, greeting the important and high-ranking Prince Vassily, the first to arrive at her soirée. Anna Pavlovna had been coughing for several days. She had the *grippe*, as she put it (*grippe* was a new word then, used only by rare people). Little notes had been sent out that morning with a red-liveried footman, and on all of them without distinction there was written:

*Si vous n’avez rien de mieux à faire, Monsieur le comte (or mon prince), et si la perspective de passer la soirée chez une pauvre malade ne vous effraye pas trop, je serai charmée de vous voir chez moi entre 7 et 10 heures.*<sup>†</sup>

Annette Scherer.

“*Dieu, quelle virulente sortie!*”<sup>‡</sup> the entering prince replied, not ruffled in the least by such a reception. He was wearing an embroidered court uniform, stockings, shoes, and stars, and had a bright expression on his flat face.

He spoke that refined French in which our grandparents not only spoke but thought, and with those quiet, patronizing intonations which are proper to a significant man who has grown old in society and at court. He went over to

\*Well, my prince, Genoa and Lucca are now no more than possessions, *estates*, of the Buonaparte family. No, I warn you, if you do not tell me we are at war, if you still allow yourself to palliate all the infamies, all the atrocities of that Antichrist (upon my word, I believe it)—I no longer know you, you are no longer my friend, you are no longer . . . as you say . . . I see that I’m frightening you . . .

<sup>†</sup>If you have nothing better to do, Monsieur the Count (*or My Prince*), and if the prospect of spending the evening with a poor sick woman does not frighten you too much, I shall be delighted to see you here between 7 and 10 o’clock.

<sup>‡</sup>God, what a virulent outburst!

Anna Pavlovna, kissed her hand, presenting her with his perfumed and shining bald pate, and settled comfortably on the sofa.

“*Avant tout dites-moi, comment vous allez, chère amie.*” \* Set me at ease,” he said, without changing his voice and in a tone in which, through propriety and sympathy, one could discern indifference and even mockery.

“How can one be well . . . when one suffers morally? Is it possible to remain at ease in our time, if one has any feeling?” said Anna Pavlovna. “You’ll stay the whole evening, I hope?”

“And the fête at the British ambassador’s? Today is Wednesday. I must put in an appearance,” said the prince. “My daughter will come to fetch me and take me there.”

“I thought today’s fête was cancelled. *Je vous avoue que toutes ces fêtes et tous ces feux d’artifice commencent à devenir insipides.*” †

“If they had known that you wished it, the fête would have been cancelled,” said the prince, uttering out of habit, like a wound-up clock, things that he did not even wish people to believe.

“*Ne me tourmentez pas. Eh bien, qu’a-t-on décidé par rapport à la dépêche de Novosiltzoff?*” ‡ *Vous savez tout.*” †

“What can I tell you?” said the prince, in a cold, bored tone. “*Qu’a-t-on décidé? On a décidé que Buonaparte a brûlé ses vaisseaux, et je crois que nous sommes en train de brûler les nôtres.*” §

Prince Vassily always spoke lazily, the way an actor speaks a role in an old play. Anna Pavlovna Scherer, on the contrary, despite her forty years, was brimming with animation and impulses.

Being an enthusiast had become her social position, and she sometimes became enthusiastic even when she had no wish to, so as not to deceive the expectations of people who knew her. The restrained smile that constantly played on Anna Pavlovna’s face, though it did not suit her outworn features, expressed, as it does in spoiled children, a constant awareness of her dear shortcoming, which she did not wish, could not, and found no need to correct.

In the midst of a conversation about political doings, Anna Pavlovna waxed vehement.

“Ah, don’t speak to me of Austria! Maybe I don’t understand anything, but Austria does not want and has never wanted war. She’s betraying us.<sup>3</sup> Russia alone must be the saviour of Europe. Our benefactor knows his lofty calling and will be faithful to it. That is the one thing I trust in. Our kind and wonderful

\*Before all, tell me how you are doing, my dear friend.

†I confess to you that all these fêtes and all these fireworks are beginning to become insipid.

‡Don’t torment me. Well, what has been decided in connection with Novosiltsov’s dispatch? You know everything.

§What has been decided? It has been decided that Bonaparte has burned his boats, and I believe that we are in the process of burning ours.

sovereign is faced with the greatest role in the world, and he is so virtuous and good that God will not abandon him, and he will fulfil his calling to crush the hydra of revolution, which has now become still more terrible in the person of this murderer and villain. We alone must redeem the blood of the righteous one.<sup>4</sup> In whom can we trust, I ask you? . . . England with her commercial spirit will not and cannot understand all the loftiness of the emperor Alexander's soul. She refused to evacuate Malta.<sup>5</sup> She wants to see, she searches for ulterior motives in our acts. What did they say to Novosiltsov? Nothing. They did not, they could not understand the self-denial of our emperor, who wants nothing for himself and everything for the good of the world. And what have they promised? Nothing. And what they did promise will not be done! Prussia has already declared that Bonaparte is invincible and that all Europe can do nothing against him . . . And I don't believe a single word of Hardenberg or of Haugwitz.<sup>6</sup> *Cette fameuse neutralité prussienne, ce n'est qu'un piège.*\* I trust only in God and in the lofty destiny of our dear emperor. He will save Europe! . . ." She suddenly stopped with a mocking smile at her own vehemence.

"I think," the prince said, smiling, "that if they sent you instead of our dear Wintzingerode, you would take the Prussian king's consent by storm.<sup>7</sup> You're so eloquent! Will you give me tea?"

"At once. *À propos*," she added, calming down again, "I'll have two very interesting men here tonight, *le vicomte de Mortemart, il est allié aux Montmorency par les Rohan*,<sup>†</sup> one of the best French families. He's one of the good émigrés,<sup>8</sup> one of the real ones. And then *l'abbé Morio*<sup>‡</sup>—do you know that profound mind? He's been received by the sovereign. Do you know him?"

"Ah! I'll be very glad," said the prince. "Tell me," he added, as if just recalling something and with special casualness, though what he asked about was the main purpose of his visit, "is it true that *l'impératrice-mère*<sup>§</sup> wants Baron Funke to be named first secretary in Vienna? *C'est un pauvre sire, ce baron, à ce qu'il paraît.*"<sup>#</sup> Prince Vassily wanted his son to be appointed to this post, which, through the empress Maria Feodorovna, had been solicited for the baron.

Anna Pavlovna all but closed her eyes as a sign that neither she nor anyone else could judge of the empress's good pleasure or liking.

"*Monsieur le baron de Funke a été recommandé à l'impératrice-mère par sa soeur*,"<sup>\*\*</sup> she merely said in a sad, dry tone. The moment Anna Pavlovna mentioned the empress, her face suddenly presented a profound and sincere

\*This famous Prussian neutrality is nothing but a trap.

†The viscount of Mortemart, he is allied to the Montmorency family through the Rohans.

‡The abbot Morio.

§The dowager empress.

#He's a poor fellow, this baron, so it seems.

\*\*Monsieur the baron of Funke was recommended to the dowager empress by her sister.

expression of devotion and respect, combined with sadness, which happened each time she referred to her exalted patroness in conversation. She said that her majesty had deigned to show Baron Funke *beaucoup d'estime*,\* and her eyes again clouded over with sadness.

The prince lapsed into indifferent silence. Anna Pavlovna, with her courtly and feminine adroitness and ready tact, wanted both to swat the prince for daring to make such a pronouncement about a person recommended to the empress, and at the same time to comfort him.

"*Mais à propos de votre famille*," she said, "do you know that your daughter, since her coming out, *fait les délices de tout le monde? On la trouve belle, comme le jour*."†

The prince bowed in a sign of respect and gratitude.

"I often think," Anna Pavlovna went on after a moment's silence, moving closer to the prince and smiling tenderly at him, as if to show thereby that the political and social conversations were at an end and a heart-to-heart one was beginning, "I often think how unfairly life's good fortune is sometimes distributed. Why has fate given you two such nice children (excluding Anatole, your youngest, I don't like him)," she put in peremptorily, raising her eyebrows, "such lovely children? And you really value them less than anyone and are therefore unworthy of them."

And she smiled her rapturous smile.

"*Que voulez-vous? Lavater aurait dit que je n'ai pas la bosse de la paternité*,"‡ said the prince.

"Stop joking. I wanted to talk seriously with you. You know, I'm displeased with your younger son. Just between us," her face acquired a sad look, "there was talk about him at her majesty's, and you were pitied . . ."

The prince did not reply, but she fell silent, looking at him significantly, waiting for a reply. Prince Vassily winced.

"What am I to do?" he said finally. "You know, I did all a father could for their upbringing, and they both turned out *des imbéciles*. Ippolit is at least an untroublesome fool, but Anatole is a troublesome one. That's the only difference," he said, smiling more unnaturally and animatedly than usual, and with that showing especially clearly in the wrinkles that formed around his mouth something unexpectedly coarse and disagreeable.

"Ah, why do such people as you have children? If you weren't a father, I'd have nothing to reproach you for," said Anna Pavlovna, raising her eyes pensively.

"*Je suis votre faithful slave, et à vous seule je puis l'avouer*. My children—

\*Much respect.

†But apropos of your family . . . has been the delight of everyone. They find her beautiful as the day.

‡What do you want? Lavater would have said that I lack the bump of paternity.

*ce sont les entraves de mon existence.* \* That's my cross. I explain it that way to myself. *Que voulez-vous? . . .*" He paused, expressing with a gesture his submission to cruel fate.

Anna Pavlovna fell to thinking.

"Have you never thought of getting your prodigal son Anatole married? They say," she observed, "that old maids *ont la manie des mariages*.† I don't feel I have that weakness yet, but I know one *petite personne* who is very unhappy with her father, *une parente à nous, une princesse Bolkonsky*."‡ Prince Vassily did not reply, though, with the quickness of grasp and memory characteristic of society people, he showed by a nod of the head that he had taken this information into account.

"No, you know, this Anatole costs me forty thousand a year," he said, obviously unable to restrain the melancholy course of his thoughts. He paused.

"How will it be in five years, if it goes on like this? *Voilà l'avantage d'être père*.§ Is she rich, this princess of yours?"

"Her father is very rich and stingy. He lives in the country. You know, it's the famous Prince Bolkonsky,<sup>9</sup> already retired under the late emperor and nicknamed 'the King of Prussia.' He's a very intelligent man, but an odd and difficult one. *La pauvre petite est malheureuse comme les pierres*.# She has a brother, Kutuzov's adjutant, the one who recently married Lise Meinen. He'll come tonight."

"*Écoutez, chère Annette*," said the prince, suddenly taking his interlocutor by the hand and pulling it down for some reason. "*Arrangez-moi cette affaire et je suis votre* faithful slave *à tout jamais* (slave—*comme mon* village headman *écrit des* reports: *f* instead of *v*).\*\* She's from a good family and rich. That's all I need."

And with those free and familiarly graceful movements which distinguished him, he took the maid of honour's hand, kissed it, and, having kissed it, waved the maid-of-honourly hand a little, sprawled himself in an armchair, and looked away.

"*Attendez*," Anna Pavlovna said, pondering. "Tonight I'll discuss it with Lise (*la femme du jeune Bolkonsky*). And maybe something can be settled. *Ce sera dans votre famille que je ferai mon apprentissage de vieille fille*."††

\*I am your . . . and to you alone can I confess it . . . they are the fetters of my existence.

†Have a mania for marriages.

‡Little person . . . a relation of ours, a princess *Bolkonsky*.

§There's the advantage of being a father.

#The poor little thing is as unhappy as can be.

\*\*Listen, dear Annette . . . Arrange this business for me and I am your . . . for ever (. . . as my . . . writes me in . . .).

††Wait . . . Liza (the wife of young *Bolkonsky*) . . . It will be in your family that I serve my apprenticeship as an old maid.