

Leo N. Tolstoy

War and Peace

Abridged Version



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This book presents the classic of world literature in a carefully abridged form. The text has been translated into modern English, while the style, tone, and expression of the original have been largely preserved. For anyone who wants quick access to this extensive classic.

1

"Well, Prince, has the Bonaparte family also taken possession of Genoa? I tell you, if you still deny the necessity of war and defend the atrocities committed by this Antichrist, then you are no longer my friend. Sit down and tell me."

It was in June 1805 when Anna Pavlovna Scherer spoke these words. She was a lady-in-waiting to the Empress and belonged to her inner circle. She was speaking to Prince Vasily.

"Oh heavens, what a violent attack!" replied the prince calmly. He wore a gold-embroidered uniform and spoke French in a condescending tone. He kissed her hand and sat down.

"First of all, reassure me about your health," he said mockingly.

"How could I feel well with such excitement? You will stay the whole evening, I hope?"

"No, not today. The English ambassador is giving a party. I must attend; my daughter will pick me up."

"I thought the party had been postponed. All these festivities bore me."

"If they had known your wishes, they would certainly have postponed them," he said mechanically.

"Don't mock me. Tell me, what has been decided about Novosiltsov's dispatch?"

"It has been decided that Bonaparte has burned his ships, and we seem to be doing the same."

The conversation about politics excited Anna Pavlovna. "Oh, don't talk to me about Austria! It doesn't want war; it is betraying us. Russia must liberate Europe. Our lord is fulfilling his mission and will crush the hydra of revolution. England is too petty-minded, Prussia is false. But I believe in God and in our emperor."

"What a pity you are not in Winzingerode's place," joked the prince.

"I'll bring tea right away," she replied, then added, "I am expecting two interesting gentlemen today. And did you know that everyone is enchanted by your daughter?"

The prince bowed.

"Only Anatol I do not love," she said firmly. "You do not appreciate your good fortune."

She smiled enthusiastically.

"What do you want?" replied the prince. "Lavater would probably have discovered that my skull lacks the bump that indicates a love of children."

"Stop joking. I am very dissatisfied with your youngest! His Majesty has spoken about him and feels sorry for you!"

"I don't know what to do anymore," said the prince, discouraged. "I've done everything I could, and yet neither

of them has turned out well. Hippolytus is a peaceful fool, Anatol a madcap." He smiled unpleasantly.

"People like you shouldn't have children at all!" remarked Anna Pavlovna.

"I am your faithful slave. My children are a burden to me, but what can I do?" He shrugged his shoulders resignedly.

"Have you never thought of marrying Anatol off? I have a young girl for him, Princess Bolkonska. She is unhappy with her father."

The prince bowed his head slightly. "You know, Anatol costs me 40,000 rubles a year! What will that be in five years? Is she rich?"

"Very rich. Her father, Prince Bolkonsky, is stingy and lives in the country. He is a stubborn man, difficult to get along with. The poor girl is unhappy. She has only one brother, an adjutant to Kutuzov.

You will see him today."

"Arrange the matter for me," cried the prince, taking her hand. "She is of good family and rich, that is enough."

"Good," replied Anna Pavlovna. "I will speak to Lisa Bolkonska today."

2

The salon filled up. The cream of St. Petersburg society was assembled. Prince Vasily's daughter, the beautiful Helene, came to fetch her father. The young Princess Bolkonskaya also appeared. She was married and in circumstances but was allowed to attend small circles.

"Have you seen my aunt?" Anna Pavlovna asked everyone, leading them to an old lady with a striking hairstyle. Everyone performed the same ceremony but later avoided her. The aunt spoke of her health and that of the empress, "which, thank God, had improved."

The little princess brought her work with her in a handbag. Her half-open lips gave her a special charm. She sat down gracefully by the samovar. "I brought my work with me," she said. "Be careful, Anna! You promised me a little company and now look at my outfit!" She showed her elegant gray dress.

"Don't worry, Lisa, you'll be the prettiest."

"Do you know that my husband is leaving me? He will bring death upon himself. Why this war?" she said to the prince, then chatted with Helene.

Then a tall young man entered, Peter, the son of the wealthy Count Visukov, who was close to death. He had just returned from abroad, without a career, and was appearing in high society for the first time.

"How kind of you to come, Monsieur Pierre," said Anna Pavlovna. Peter stammered, suddenly smiled, and greeted the little princess warmly. Then he bowed to his aunt but left in the middle of the conversation.

"Do you know Abbé Morio?" asked Anna Pavlovna. "A very interesting man!" "Yes, I have heard of his project for eternal peace. Very ingenious, but impracticable."

"Do you think so?" asked Anna Pavlovna, just to say something.

Peter was guilty of another discourtesy. He began to explain why Abbé Morio's project was a pipe dream.

"We will talk about it later," replied Anna Pavlovna, and she withdrew to perform her duties as hostess. She skillfully revived faltering conversations by mixing groups or interjecting a word.

It was Peter's first time in Russian society. He knew that all of St. Petersburg's intelligentsia was gathered there and, like all young people, he was restlessly looking for an opportunity to express his opinion.

3

The conversation was in full swing. Three groups had formed: around the abbé, around Helene, and around Anna Pavlovna with Count Mortemart. The count, with his gentle face and refined manners, played the role of a celebrity. Anna Pavlovna praised him to all the guests and presented him like a precious dish. People talked about the execution of the Duke of Enghien.

"Yes, tell us!" she exclaimed. The count bowed.

"How beautiful she is!" people exclaimed when Helene stepped forward, radiant.

"I am intimidated," said the count.

"Wait!" cried the little princess, "I must fetch my work. Bring me my handbag!" she said to Hippolyt.

The count began his anecdote. The duke had secretly traveled to Paris to see Mademoiselle George, where he encountered Napoleon, who fainted from jealousy. The duke did not take advantage of the situation, but Bonaparte took revenge and had him shot.

"Charming!" whispered the ladies, and the little princess put down her work.

Meanwhile, Peter was discussing the political balance with the abbé. Both were speaking loudly, which displeased Anna Pavlovna.

"How can this balance be achieved?" Peter exclaimed when she gave him a stern look.

Then Prince Bolkonsky, the husband of the little princess, entered, a handsome man with a tired look in his eyes. He greeted her coldly, turned away from his wife in a huff, and kissed Anna Pavlovna's hand.

"Are you preparing for war, Prince?" asked Anna Pavlovna.

"Kutuzov has chosen me as his aide-de-camp," replied Bolkonsky.

"And your wife?"

"She is going to the country."

"Aren't you ashamed to deprive us of your delightful wife?"

"Andree!" cried the little princess coquettishly. "If only you knew the pretty story the count told."

The prince made a sullen face and left. Peter followed him and took his hand. Andre's expression brightened. "Oh, are you also in high society?" he exclaimed.

"I will soon dine with you, if I may?" "No," laughed Andree, squeezing his hand.

Then Prince Wassil and Helene took their leave.

"She is very beautiful!" said Andree.

"Yes, very," replied Peter.

"Finish educating this bear," Vasily whispered to Anna Pavlovna as he passed by.

4

Anna Pavlovna promised to deal with Peter. Then an old lady, Princess Drubezkoi, approached Prince Vasily. "What do you have to say to me, Prince, about my Boris? I can no longer stay in St. Petersburg. Tell me what I can say to my poor son. It will only take a word from you to the Emperor for him to join the Guard."

"Be assured that I will do everything I can, but it is difficult. Turn to Rumyantsev."

"Listen, Prince, I have never asked you for anything. Do this for my son and you will be our benefactor," she said hastily, squeezing his arm. "No, you must promise me. I have already been to Galitsin, but he turned me away."

"Papa, we'll be late," Helene called from the door.

The prince knew that requests were dangerous, but he felt obliged.

"Dearest Anna Mikhailovna," he said, "I will try, out of respect for your father. Your son will join the Guard; you have my word."

"Dear Prince, you are my benefactor! One more thing - you are on good terms with Kutuzov, you will recommend Boris to become an adjutant?"

"I cannot promise that. Since Kutuzov became commander-in-chief, he has been inundated with petitions."

"No, promise me!"

"Papa," Helene repeated, "we're late."

"Goodbye! I cannot stay any longer. Tomorrow I will speak to the emperor, but as far as Kutuzov is concerned, I can't promise anything."

"My Vasily," Anna Mikhailovna smiled coquettishly. But as soon as he was gone, her face took on its old, cold expression again.

"What do you think of this new comedy?" asked Anna Pavlovna. "Bonaparte sits on a throne and listens to the wishes of the nation. The world has gone mad!"

"The regents can no longer tolerate him," she exclaimed.

"The regents?" replied the emigrant sadly. "What did they do for Louis XVI? Nothing! If Napoleon stays another year, high society will be destroyed."

Peter wanted to speak, but the lady-in-waiting beat him to it. "Emperor Alexander is leaving the French to their form of government. They will turn to their king as soon as the usurper falls."

"That is unlikely," Andree remarked.

"Most of the nobility are already on Napoleon's side," Peter interjected.

"That's what the Bonapartists claim!" exclaimed the count.

"The execution of the Duke of Enghien was a necessity," said Peter, "and Napoleon showed greatness of soul."

"Oh! Oh!" they cried.

"Napoleon alone defeated the Revolution and preserved its good achievements. That is why he is great."

"Great? Because he murders?" replied the count.

"The nation gave him the power to overthrow the Bourbons. The Revolution was a great achievement."

"Wouldn't you like to sit at the other table?" repeated Anna Pavlovna, horrified.

"Is it the deed of a great man to shoot a duke without trial?" she asked.

"He's just a commoner," Hippolyt sneered.

Peter fell silent. Then Andree said, "One must distinguish between a private individual and a statesman."

"Certainly!" Peter exclaimed happily. Andree continued, "Napoleon is great on the bridge at Areole, but other things are difficult to excuse." Then he rose and signaled to his wife that it was time to leave.

5

The guests took their leave. Peter, tall and awkward, did not know how to leave the salon.

Distractedly, he had grabbed a general's hat. But his sincerity and kindness made up for everything.

"I hope," said Anna Pavlovna gently, "to see you again soon - and that you will change your views."

Peter bowed with a smile, without replying.

In the anteroom, the little princess said quietly, "It is settled."

"I'm counting on you," Anna Pavlovna replied just as quietly. "Write to her and tell me what her father thinks."

Hippolyt whispered something to the princess. "I'm glad I didn't go to the ambassador. How boring!"

"The ball is supposed to be very beautiful," she replied.

"Not all the finery will be there, because you will be missing," he smiled.

"Are you ready?" asked Prince Andree.

"Peter, will you be coming?" he called out cheerfully before continuing on with his wife.

Hippolyt laughed nervously and got into the carriage with the count.

"Your little princess is charming," said the count, kissing her fingertips. "I feel sorry for her poor husband."

"And you say Russian ladies are not like French ladies? You just have to know how to take them!" exclaimed Hippolyt with a laugh.

6

Peter arrived first and stretched out on the sofa. He reached for Caesar's commentaries when Prince Andree entered.

"What were you doing at Miss Scherer's?" he asked.

Peter turned around. "The abbé is interesting, but he is mistaken. I believe in lasting peace, but not through political balance."

"My dear fellow," Andree interrupted, "you can't say what you think everywhere. Have you made up your mind? The guard or diplomacy?"

"Neither" replied Peter.

"You have to make up your mind, your father is waiting."

Peter had returned after years abroad. He had been looking for a career for three months - in vain.

"Have you seen the guard?" asked Andree.

"No. But if someone were fighting for freedom, I would be the first to join them. England and Austria are helping to fight the greatest man in the world - that's not good."

Andree shrugged. "If everyone fought for their convictions, there would be no war."

"That would be excellent."

"Possible, but never achievable," said Andree with a smile.

"So why war?"

"Why? I don't know. It has to be. And I am going - because I'm tired of this life."

7

A dress rustled in the next room. Prince Andree stood up, and Peter put his feet on the floor. The princess entered, elegant in her house dress. Her husband offered her an armchair.

"I wonder," she began animatedly, "why Anna Pavlovna never married? Men are stupid! And you,

Monsieur Pierre, don't understand women at all. And what a speaker you are!"

"I argue with your husband because I don't understand why he goes to war," Peter said frankly.

"Well, I say the same thing," she exclaimed. "Why can't men live without war? His position here is brilliant, everyone knows him. The other day I heard someone say, 'Is that the famous Prince Andree?' And he could be the emperor's aide-de-camp!"

Peter fell silent when he noticed his friend's anger.

"When are you leaving?" he asked.

"Oh, don't talk about it! I don't want to hear anything! I am afraid," she exclaimed, narrowing her eyes.

"What are you afraid of, Lisa?" Andree asked coolly.

"You are all selfish! On a whim, he is leaving me and sending me to the country."

"With my father and sister."

"It is the same thing! I am supposed to be alone!"

"I don't understand what you are afraid of," he said slowly.

"Andree, why have you changed so much?"

"The doctor forbids you to stay up late. Go to sleep."

The princess was silent, her lip twitching. Andree shrugged and paced up and down the room while Peter watched in astonishment.

"I don't care if Monsieur Pierre is here!" cried the princess excitedly. "Why are you so different towards me, Andree? You are leaving without compassion!"

"Lisa!" he cried in a threatening tone.

But she continued, "You treat me like a child! Six months ago, you weren't like this!" "Stop it!" he replied loudly.

Peter stepped closer, moved. "Calm down, Princess! These are just ideas... Adieu!"

"No, stay," said Andree.

"Oh yes, he only thinks of himself," she murmured, crying.

"Lisa," he said sharply.

She looked at him fearfully and kissed him hastily.

"Good night, Lisa!" he said and kissed her hand as if she were a stranger.

8

The friends were silent. "Let's eat," said Andree, leading Peter into the magnificent dining room. Suddenly he rested his elbow on the table and spoke hastily. "My dear friend, don't marry until you have accomplished everything you want to. Otherwise, you will be cruelly deceiving yourself. Don't marry until you are old, then you will no longer be risking anything. If you still have expectations, you will feel that everything is closed to you except the salons. What for?"

Peter took off his glasses, astonished.

Prince Andree continued. "My wife is wonderful, but what I would give not to be married! You are the first person I have ever told this to." His features twitched feverishly.

"You don't understand me. You are talking about Bonaparte. He was free, had a goal, and achieved it.

But we are convicts. I go to war, know nothing, can do nothing, am only amiable with Miss Scherer. And this society, these women! Egoism, vanity, stupidity - nothing else! Don't get married!"

"I am amazed," Peter said quietly, "that you consider yourself incapable when the future lies before you..."

"It's over for me. Let's talk about you."

"Me? A bastard!" Peter blushed. "Without a name, without fortune - and yet free and content. But I don't know what to do. I wanted to ask your advice."

Andree smiled benevolently, but not without superiority. "I like you because you are the only living person in our circle," said Andree. "But give up your acquaintance with Kuragin! This hussar life, this debauchery..."

Peter shrugged. "What do you want, my dear? The women, my friend, the women."

"Well, women *comme il faut*, but not those of Kuragin and the wine," replied Andree.

"You know," Peter said suddenly, "I thought the same thing. I can't make up my mind about anything. I have a headache and no money. He invited me, but I am not going!"

"Give me your word of honor!"

"Certainly, I do!"

9

It was after one o'clock when Peter left the house. He got into a cab, determined to go home. But the idea of sleeping on such a night seemed impossible to him. He thought of the company at Anatol Kuragin's.

"Should I not go?" he asked himself but then remembered his promise. Nevertheless, his desire prevailed and he drove to Anatol's. He got out in front of a lighted house. The anteroom smelled of wine. Further inside, people were laughing loudly and a bear was growling. Eight young men stood at the open window, three of them playing with the animal.

"I'm betting on Steven!" shouted one.

"I'm betting on Dolokhov!" shouted another.

"Kuragin, drink!"

Anatol, without his coat and with his shirt open, turned to Peter. "There's Petrushka! You have to drink first."

Peter drank glass after glass.

Dolokhov, a young officer with a sharp gaze and a constant smile, calmly explained the bet. He wanted to sit on a third-floor windowsill and drink a bottle of rum, his legs dangling outside.

"Drink up!" Anatol repeated.

"No, I don't want any more," said Peter.

Rum was brought. Two servants tore out the window frame, and Anatol broke a pane in the process.

"Well, Hercules," he shouted.

Peter grabbed the frame and tore it out.

Dolokhov took the bottle, jumped onto the parapet, and shouted, "I bet 50 gold pieces that I can drink this bottle outside without holding on!"

"Agreed," said the Englishman. Anatol repeated the conditions in English.

"And if someone else does it, I'll pay 100!" cried Dolokhov.

A guardsman climbed onto the window. "Oh! Oh!" he murmured.

"Quiet!" cried Dolokhov, pulling him back. Then he sat down on the ledge, let go of his hands, and took the bottle. Anatol placed candles in the opening, even though it was already light. Everyone crowded to the window.

"Gentlemen, this is madness!" cried one.

"Don't touch him!" shouted Anatol.

"Anyone who interferes, I'll throw him down!" cried Dolokhov. He raised the bottle and drank, his head back, his free arm raised. Silence reigned, only the servant remained crouched, his eyes fixed on Dolokhov.

Peter closed his eyes. When he looked again, Dolokhov was bowing his head more deeply, the bottle almost empty.

Suddenly his arm jerked, he threatened to fall, grabbed the window crossbar - and let go.

Then he jumped into the room, pale but cheerful. "It's empty!" he cried, throwing the bottle to the Englishman.

"Bravo! Bravo! That's a bet!" everyone shouted.

The Englishman paid Dolokhov, who became silent. Then Peter shouted, "Who bets that I can do the same? Quick, bring a bottle!"

"Are you crazy?" several shouted.

"Bring a bottle!" Peter banged on the table.

"Listen," Anatol shouted, "tomorrow! Now let's all go!"

"Fine, let's go - and we'll take Mishka with us!" laughed Peter, dancing across the room with the bear.

10

Prince Vasily had kept his promise. Boris became a lieutenant in the guard, but despite all his mother's efforts, he did not become Kutuzov's adjutant. After the soirée, Princess Drubezkoi traveled to Moscow to visit the Rostovs, with whom she had been acquainted for years. There they celebrated the name day of the countess and her youngest daughter, Natalie.

Visitors filled the house. The countess received them with her older daughter in the salon. She was a woman of 45, thin and weak, but dignified. Princess Drubezkoi assisted her with the reception. The count greeted the guests and repeated tirelessly, "Thank you, mon cher. You will come to dinner, won't you? Otherwise, you would offend me!"

A servant announced, "Maria Karagin!"

"My God, how these visits exhaust me! But let her in," sighed the countess.

Madame Karagin appeared with a young lady. Courtesies mingled with the rustling of dresses, then the usual conversation began. They talked about the old Count Visitov and his son Peter. "I pity the poor count," said Madame Karagin. "To have a son who causes him such grief!"

"What grief?" asked the countess hypocritically.

"He has fallen into bad company," explained Princess Drubezkoi. "With Kuragin's son and a certain

Dolokhov. Horrible stories! Dolokhov was made a soldier and Visitov's son had to leave Petersburg." "But what did they do?"

"They say they caught a young bear, tied up a police officer, and chased him into the Moika River with the bear!"

"Unbelievable!" exclaimed the countess.

"Oh, ma chère, how funny that man must have looked!" exclaimed the count, laughing.

"But that's appalling!" exclaimed Madame Karagin, then blurted out herself. "And to think that Count Visitov's son is enjoying himself so much! He was considered well-mannered! I hope no one will receive him anywhere. They wanted to introduce him to me, but I refused - I have daughters!" "How do you know he's rich?" asked the countess.

"I will tell you," Princess Drubezkoi interjected. "Peter is the count's favorite child. No one knows whether Peter or Prince Vasily will inherit. It's 40,000 souls and millions in capital."

"Prince Vasily has been in Moscow since yesterday," remarked the countess.

"Yes, he came because the Count's health has deteriorated."

"But the story is very good!" exclaimed the count, laughing.

"It torments me," whispered Marie. "He is such an extraordinary boy, and always alone."

"You are doing everything the most loving mother could do," Nikolai consoled her. "I will take him to Petersburg in the summer."

Then he continued excitedly, "What do I care about Araktschejew? I have enough to provide for my family. Today I was offered 80,000 rubles for the forest. Maybe I will buy Otradno back soon. Another ten years, and the children will be taken care of!"

Marie kissed his hand. He took this as agreement and continued to talk about his plans, filled with pride and concern for the future.

Marie listened to him, although she was hardly interested in his words. She knew that he got annoyed when she was distracted, so she made an effort. She loved him obediently and tenderly, precisely because he could not understand everything that she understood. But her thoughts were with her nephew. She compared him to her children and felt guilty because her love was not the same. "I must love them all as Christ loves mankind," she thought. Her soul strove for perfection and found no peace.

Epilogue 12

When Natalie was alone with her husband, she approached him with shining eyes and said, "Now you are all mine!" This began a conversation that defied all rules of logic, but for her was the surest sign of complete understanding.

Natalie told him how she had endured his absence, how she had learned to love Marie even more.

"She is better than me in every way." Peter replied how unbearable he had found society in Petersburg. "I have forgotten how to talk to ladies."

"Marie is delightful! How she understands children! Yesterday, for example..."

"Oh, how he resembles his father," Peter interrupted. Natalie smiled. "Nikolai has a weakness. If you don't agree with him, he stops listening."

"Yes," said Peter, "for him, thoughts are just a pastime. In Petersburg, I saw everything as if in a dream. But my thought is simple, no resistance, no violence. Instead, all who love goodness should work arm in arm. Only one flag! Prince Fedor is excellent."

Natalie did not doubt the greatness of his idea, but inwardly she asked herself, "Can such an important man also be my husband? How did that happen?"

"I love you terribly!" said Natalie. "Terribly!"

"You talk about separation, but you can't imagine how I feel then," replied Peter. "I will never stop loving you."

"What nonsense! Now is the best time, if only you weren't going away. Do you remember how we used to argue? It was always my fault."

"Always about the same thing - jealousy!"

"Don't talk about it!" Natalie exclaimed vehemently. "You saw her?"

"No, and even if I had, I wouldn't have recognized her."

They fell silent. Then Natalie smiled. "In the cabinet, when you spoke, he looked exactly like him." After a pause, they turned to each other.

"What did you want to say?"

"No, you speak!"

Peter continued, "All thoughts with major consequences are simple. When wicked people join forces, honest people must do the same. It is simple, isn't it?"

"Yes. And I just wanted to say - nothing important. Petya hid today when the nanny came! So cute!" She laughed and went out.

At the same time, the night lamp was burning in Nikolai Bolkonsky's room. He awoke from a dream. He and Uncle Peter were leading troops into the light of glory, but suddenly Uncle Nikolai stepped forward. "Arakcheyev has ordered it! I will strike down the first one!" Peter disappeared, his father appeared, and the boy felt powerless. He awoke in horror.

"My father was with me," thought Nikolai. "I will study, but later I will do great things like the men of Plutarch. Everyone shall love me!" Tears welled up in his eyes.

"Are you not feeling well?" asked Desalles.

"No," replied Nikolai and lay down. "Uncle Peter! What a wonderful man! And my father! I will accomplish such great things that even he will be satisfied!"