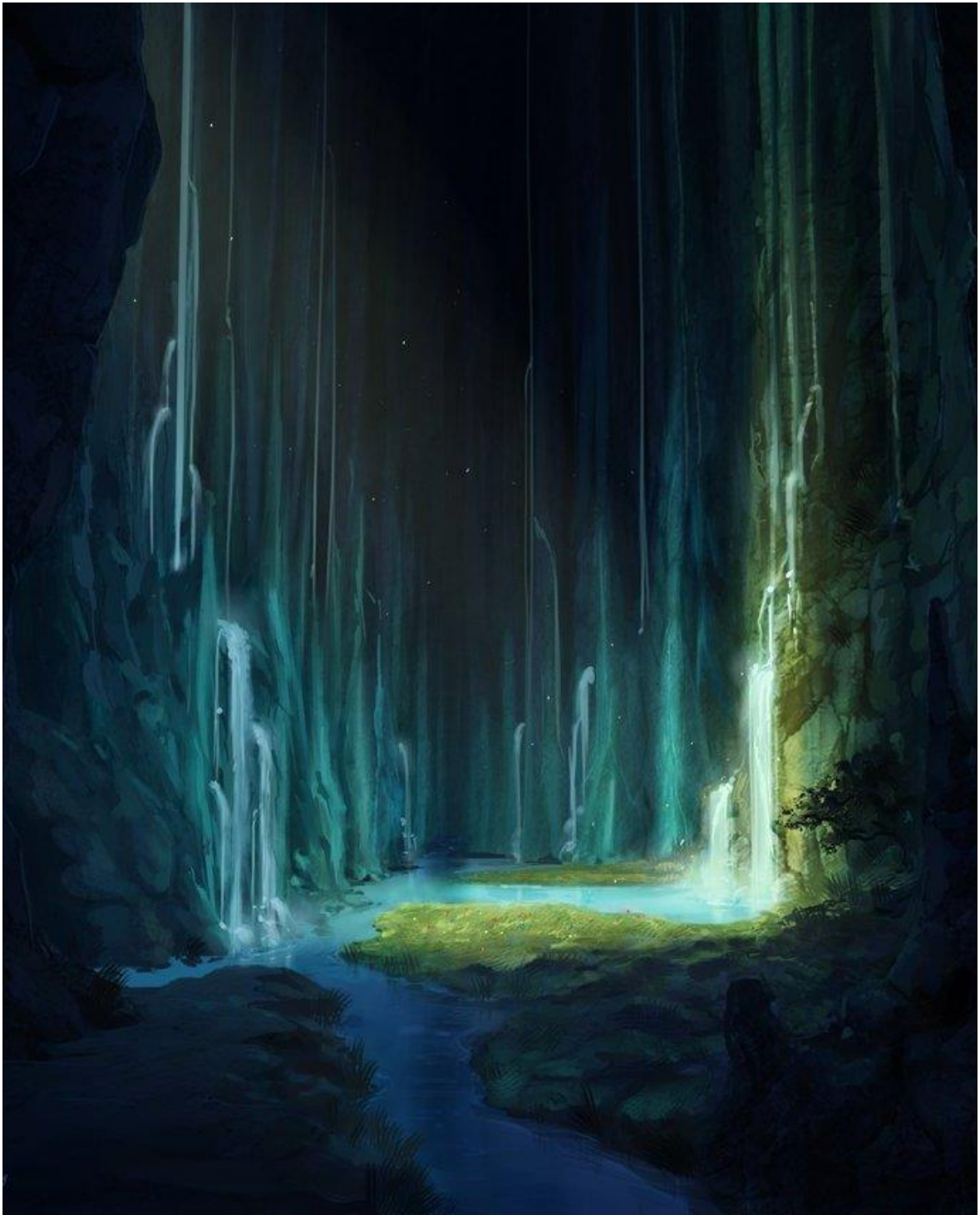


Retributive Justice in the Cave of the Echoes



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A tale of retributive justice inflicted by an earthbound spirit

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In the older countries of Europe and Asia there frequently occur examples of interference by the dead with the living, to which American Spiritualists are as yet comparative strangers. The experience of many generations has taught the higher, equally with the lower classes, to accept this intervention as a fixed fact. With this difference, however, that as a rule, the former acknowledging the reality of the phenomena, find, to escape ridicule, a convenient loophole by attributing them to strange coincidences, while the latter, with less learning but more intuition, have no difficulty in divining the real cause. Tales calculated to freeze the blood with horror circulate in many of the lands I have visited, and more than once, instances of the reward and punishment of good or evil deeds by occult agency have come under my own observation.

The story I am about to relate has the merit of being perfectly true. The family is well-known in that portion of the Russian dominions where the scene is located. The circumstance was witnessed by one of my relatives, upon whom it made an impression that he carried to his grave. My object in telling it is to illustrate one of the many phases of psychological science studied by Theosophists, and which must be studied by whoever would inform himself thoroughly upon the relations of living man with the silent world of shadows — that bourne from which . . . *some travellers do return*.

It may be taken as a case of mediumship of a most striking kind — in short, a *transfiguration*. It differs only in degree from that of Mrs. Markee — formerly Compton — witnessed and described by Colonel Olcott in his work, and one of the most astounding ones on record.² The physical body of Mrs. Compton was transformed alternately into the shapes of a dwarfish girl and a tall Indian chief. In the present instance the haunting soul of an old man enters a child's body, and temporarily re-incarnating itself, becomes the agent of inexorable destiny. The intelligent reader will need no further hint to enable him to trace the lesson which my veracious narrative conveys.³

¹ [In her *Scrapbook*, Vol. I, p. 119, where the cuttings of this story are pasted. H.P. Blavatsky wrote in pen and ink:

3rd story (Killed on account of being too horrible . . .)

She most likely means by this that the New York *Sun* refused to publish it at the time her 1st and 2nd stories appeared therein.

This story was republished by H.P. Blavatsky in *The Theosophist*, Vol. IV, April, 1883, pp. 164-66, and later appeared in a Russian version — most likely from Blavatsky's own pen — in *Rebus* (Riddle), Vol. V, January 5th, 12th and 19th, 1886. The latter version is somewhat fuller, even though it lacks some of the paragraphs of the English text. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

² [Vide Col. H.S. Olcott, *People from the Other World*, Hartford, Conn., 1875, pp. 479 et seq. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

³ [The opening paragraphs, up to here, do not occur in the Russian version of this story. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

In one of the distant governments of Russia, in a small town on the very borders of Siberia, a mysterious tragedy occurred some twenty years ago — a tragedy which haunts the memory of the older inhabitants of the district to this very day, and is recounted but in whispers to the inquisitive traveller.

About six versts¹ from the little town of P * * * , famous for the wild beauty of its scenery, and for the wealth of its inhabitants — generally proprietors of mines and iron foundries — stood an old and aristocratic mansion. Its household consisted of the master, a rich old bachelor, and his brother, a widower and the father of two sons and three daughters. It was known that the proprietor, Mr. Izvertzoff, had adopted his brother's children, and, having formed an especial attachment for his eldest nephew, Nicholas, had made him the sole heir to his numerous estates.

Time rolled on. The uncle was getting old, the nephew coming of age. Days and years had passed in monotonous serenity, when, on the hitherto clear horizon of the quiet family appeared a cloud. On an unlucky day one of the nieces took it into her head to study the zither. The instrument being of purely Teutonic origin, and no teacher for that specialty residing in the neighbourhood, the indulgent uncle sent to St. Petersburg for both. After diligent search only one such professor could be found willing to trust himself in such close proximity to Siberia. It was an old German artist, who, sharing equally his earthly affections between his instrument and a pretty blonde daughter, would part with neither. And thus it came to pass that, one fine morning, the old professor arrived at the mansion with his zither-case under one arm, and his fair Minchen leaning on the other.

From that day the little cloud began growing rapidly; for every vibration of the melodious instrument found a responsive echo in the old bachelor's heart. Music awakens love, they say, and the work begun by the zither was completed by Minchen's blue eyes. At the expiration of six months the niece had become an expert zither player and the uncle was desperately in love. One morning, gathering his adopted family around him, he embraced them all very tenderly, promised to remember them in his will, and wound up by declaring his unalterable resolution to marry the blue-eyed Minchen. After which he fell upon their necks and wept in silent rapture. The family also wept: but it was for another cause. Having paid this tribute to self-interest, they tried their best to rejoice, for the old gentleman was sincerely beloved. Not all of them rejoiced, though. Nicholas, who had equally felt himself heart-smitten by the pretty Germain maid, and who found himself at once defrauded of his belle and his uncle's money, neither rejoiced nor consoled himself, but disappeared for the whole day.

Starting on a long journey

Meanwhile Mr. Izvertzoff gave orders to prepare his travelling carriage for the following morning. It was whispered that he was going to the government town at some distance from here, with the intention of altering his will. Though very wealthy he had no superintendent on his estate, but kept his books himself. The same evening, after supper, he was heard in his room scolding angrily at his body-servant who had

¹ [Obsolete Russian unit of length, 500 sazhen long, which makes a verst equal to 1.0668 kilometres.]

been in his service for over thirty years. This man, Ivan, was a native of Northern Asia, from Kamchatka. Brought up by the family in the Christian religion, he was thought very much attached to his master. But when the tragic circumstances I am about to relate had brought all the police force to the spot, it was remembered that Ivan was drunk on that night; that his master, who had a horror of this vice, had paternally thrashed him and turned him out of the room; and that Ivan had been seen reeling out of the door and heard to mutter threats.

There was on the estate of the Izvertzoffs a great cavern, which excited (and still excites) the curiosity of all who visited it. A pine forest, which began nearly at the garden gate, climbed by steep terraces a long range of rocky hills, which it covered with a belt of impenetrable verdure. The grotto leading to the place which people called the "Cave of the Echoes," was situated about half a mile from the mansion, from which it appeared as a small excavation in the hillside, almost hidden by luxuriant plants. Still it was not so masked as to prevent any person entering it from being readily seen from the terrace of the house. Inside the grotto, the explorer finds at the rear of an ante-chamber a narrow cleft, having passed which he emerges into a lofty cavern, feebly lighted through fissures in a ceiling fifty feet high. The cavern itself is immense, capable of easily holding two or three thousand people. A part of it was, at the time of my story, paved with flags, and often used in the summer by picnic parties as a ball-room. Of an irregular oval shape, it gradually narrows into a broad corridor, which runs several miles underground, intercepted here and there by other chambers as large and lofty as the ballroom, but, unlike that, inaccessible except by boat, as they are full of water. These natural basins have the reputation of being unfathomable.

The Echoes

On the margin of the first of these was a small platform, with several mossy rustic seats arranged on it, and it is from this spot that the phenomenal echoes were heard in all their weirdness. A word pronounced in a whisper or a sigh seemed caught up by endless, mocking voices, and instead of diminishing in volume, as honest echoes generally do, the sound grew louder at every successive repetition, until at last it burst forth like the repercussion of a pistol shot, and receded in a plaintive wail down the corridor.

On the evening in question, Mr. Izvertzoff had mentioned his intention of having a dancing party in the cave on his wedding day, which he had fixed for an early date. On the following morning, while preparing for his departure, he was seen by his family entering the grotto, accompanied only by the Siberian. Half an hour later Ivan returned to the mansion for a snuffbox which his master had forgotten in his room, and went back with it to the cave. An hour later the whole household was startled with his loud cries. Pale, and dripping with water, Ivan rushed in like a madman and declared that Mr. Izvertzoff was nowhere to be found in the grotto. Thinking he had fallen into one of the lakes, he had dived into the first basin in search of him, and got nearly drowned himself.

The day passed in vain attempts to find the body. The police filled the house, and louder than the rest in his despair seemed Nicholas, the nephew, who had returned home only in time to hear the sad tidings.

A dark suspicion fell upon Ivan, the Siberian. He had been struck by his master the night before, and had been heard to swear revenge. He had accompanied him alone to the cave, and when his room was searched a casket full of rich family jewellery, known to have been carefully kept in old Izvertzoff's apartment, was found under Ivan's bedding. Vainly did the man call God to witness that the casket had been handed to him in charge by his master himself, just before they proceeded to the cave; that it was the latter's purpose to have the jewellery reset, as he intended it for a wedding present for his bride, and that he, Ivan, would willingly give his own life to recall that of his benefactor, if he knew him to be dead. No heed was paid to him, however, and he was arrested upon the charge of foul murder, though no definite sentence could be passed on him, as, under the old Russian law, a criminal cannot be sentenced for any crime, however conclusive the evidence, unless he confesses his guilt; yet the poor man had the prospect of prison for the whole of his life, unless he did confess.

A marriage

After a week spent in useless search the family arrayed themselves in deep mourning, and, as the will as originally drawn remained without a codicil, the whole of the estate passed into the hands of the nephew. The old teacher and his fair daughter bore this sudden reverse of fortune with true Germanic phlegm, and prepared to depart. Taking again his zither under one arm, the father was about to lead his Minchen by the other, when the nephew stopped him by offering himself as groom instead of his departed uncle. The change was found an agreeable one, and, without much ado, the young couple were married.

Ten years roll away again, and we find the happy family at the beginning of 1855. The fair, blue-eyed Minchen had become fat and vulgar. From the day of the old man's disappearance Nicholas had been morose and retired in his habits. Many wondered at the change in him, for now he was never seen to smile. It seemed as if his only aim in life, since the catastrophe, was to find out his uncle's murderer or rather to bring Ivan to confess his guilt. But the man still persisted that he was innocent.

An only son had been born to the young couple, and it was hoped that this would have brought a ray of sunshine to the father's heart. But it was such a weak and puny little creature that it seemed scarce able to catch its breath; and so, according to the Russian custom in such cases, the family priest was called to christen it the same evening, lest, dying, it might go to the place prepared for unbaptized infants by Christian theology. The family and servants were gathered at the ceremony in the large reception room of the house, and the priest was about to dip the babe thrice in the water, when he was seen to stop abruptly, turn deadly pale, and stare into vacancy, while his hands shook so violently that he almost dropped the child into the baptismal font. At the same time, the nurse, who stood at the end of the first row of spectators, gave a wild shriek, and pointing to the direction of the library room used

by the old Izvertzoff, ran away in terror. No one could understand the panic of these two personages, for, except them, no one had seen anything extraordinary. Some had remarked the library door swing slowly open, but it must have been caused by the wind, which was now wailing all through the old mansion. After the ceremony, the priest, corroborated by the hysterically sobbing maid, solemnly averred that he had seen, for one moment, the apparition of the deceased master upon the threshold of his library, then swiftly glide toward the font, and instantly disappear. Both witnesses described the spectre as having on its features an expression of menace. The priest, after crossing himself and muttering prayers, insisted that the whole family should have Masses said for the space of seven weeks for the repose of the "troubled soul."¹

It was a strange child, this babe of Nicholas and Minchen, and seemed to have an uncanny atmosphere about it. Small, delicate, and ever ailing, his frail life appeared to hang by a thread as he grew. When his features were in repose, his resemblance to his grand uncle was so striking that the members of the family often shrank from him in terror. It was the pale, shrivelled face of a man of sixty upon the shoulders of a child of nine years. He was never seen to either laugh or play; but, perched in his high chair, gravely sat, folding his arms in a way peculiar to the late Izvertzoff. He would remain so for hours, motionless and drowsy. His nurse was often seen furtively crossing herself, at night upon approaching him; and not one of his attendants would consent to sleep alone with him in the nursery. His father's behaviour toward him was still more strange. He seemed to love him passionately, and yet to hate him bitterly at moments. He never embraced or caressed the boy, but would pass long hours watching him, with livid cheek and staring eye, as he sat quietly in a corner, in his goblin-like, old-fashioned way. The child had never left the estate, and few outside the family knew him.

A mysterious traveller

About the middle of July, a tall Hungarian traveller, preceded by a great reputation for eccentricity, wealth, and most extraordinary mesmeric powers, arrived at P * * * from Kamchatka, where, as was rumoured, he had resided for some time, surrounded by Shamans. He settled in the little town, with one of this sect, and was said to experiment in mesmerism on this North Siberian "sorcerer," as he was called by the inhabitants. He gave dinners and parties, and during such receptions, invariably exhibited his Shaman of whom he felt very proud. One day, the notables of P * * * made an unexpected invasion of the domain of Nicholas Izvertzoff, and requested of him the loan of his "Cave" for an evening entertainment. Nicholas consented with great reluctance, and with still greater hesitancy was he prevailed upon to join the party, among whom was my own relative.

The first cavern and the platform beside the bottomless lake glittered that evening with lights. Hundreds of flickering torches and lamps, stuck in the clefts of the rocks, illuminated the place, and drove the shadows from the mossy nooks and corners, where they had been undisturbed for many years. The stalactites on the walls sparkled brightly, and the sleeping echoes were suddenly awakened by a confusion of

¹ [This entire scene is lacking in the Russian version of the story. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

joyous laughter and conversation. The Shaman, who was never lost sight of by his friend and patron, sat in a corner, half entranced as usual. Crouched on a projecting rock, about midway between the entrance and the water, with his orange-yellow wrinkled face, flat nose, and thin beard, he looked more like an ugly stone idol than a human being. Many of the company pressed round him and received correct answers from the oracle to their questions, the Hungarian cheerfully submitting his mesmerized "subject" to cross examination.

A loving nephew

Suddenly one of the party, a lady, thoughtlessly remarked that it was in that very cave that old Mr. Izvertzoff had so unaccountably disappeared ten years before. The foreigner appeared interested, and desired to learn more of the mysterious circumstances. Nicholas was sought in the crowd, and led before the eager group. He was the host, and he found it impossible to refuse the narrative demanded by a sympathizing guest. He repeated the sad tale in a trembling voice, with a pallid cheek, and a tear was seen to glitter in his feverish eye. The company was greatly affected, and encomiums upon the behaviour of the loving nephew, who so honoured the memory of his uncle and benefactor, freely circulated in sympathetic whispers. Suddenly the voice of Nicholas became choked, his eyes started from their sockets, and, with a suppressed groan, he staggered back. Every eye in the crowd followed with curiosity his haggard look, as it remained riveted upon a weazened¹ little face that peeped from behind the back of the Shaman.

"Where do you come from? Who brought you here, child?" lisped out Nicholas, as pale as death itself.

"I was in bed, papa; this man came to me and brought me here in his arms," simply answered the boy, pointing to the Shaman, beside whom he stood on the rock, and who, with his eyes closed, kept swaying himself to and fro like a living pendulum.

"That is very strange," remarked one of the guests; "why, the man has never moved from his place!"

"Good God! What an extraordinary resemblance!" muttered an old resident of the town, a friend of the dead man.

"You lie, boy!" fiercely exclaimed the father. "Return to your bed; this is no place for you. . . ."

"Come, come," interposed the Hungarian, with a strange expression of authority on his face, and encircling with his arm, as if in protection, the slender, childish figure. "The little fellow has seen my Shaman's double, which roams sometimes far away from his body, and has mistaken the astral man for the outward phantom itself. Let the child remain with us awhile."

At these strange words the guests stared at each other in mute surprise, and some of them looked upon the speaker with real terror.

¹ [Dry, shrunken, and wrinkled, often as a result of aging or of failing vitality.]

Unravelling the mystery at last

"By the bye," continued the Hungarian, with a very peculiar firmness of accent, and addressing the public rather than any one in particular, "why should we not try to unravel the mystery hanging over that tragedy, with the help of the clairvoyant powers of my Shaman? Is the suspected party still lying in prison? What? . . . not confessed till now? This is indeed strange. But now we will learn the truth in a few minutes. . . . My Shaman's second sight, when properly directed, never errs. Let all keep silent!"

He then approached the Tehuktchene, and making as though drawing an imaginary circle with his hand around himself, the Shaman, and boy, immediately began his operations over the subject without so much as asking the consent of the master of the place. The latter stood rooted to the spot as if petrified with horror, and unable to articulate a sound. Except by him, the suggestion was met with general approbation, and the "Police-Master," Colonel S * * * , was the first to approve the idea.

"Ladies and gentlemen," then said the mesmerizer in amiable tone, "allow me for this once to proceed otherwise than I generally do. I will employ the method of native magic. It is more appropriate to this wild place, and, I dare say, we will find it far more effective than our European mode of mesmerisation."

Without waiting for an answer he drew from a bag that, as he explained, never left his person, first, a small drum, and then two little vials — one full of liquid, the other empty. With the contents of the former he sprinkled the Shaman, who fell to trembling and nodding more violently than ever. The air was filled with the perfumes of spicy odours, and the atmosphere itself seemed to become clearer. Then, to the horror of those present, he approached the Shaman, and taking a miniature, antiquated-looking knife from his bosom, quietly plunged the sharp steel into the man's forearm and, drew blood from it, which he caught in the empty vial. When it was half-filled he pressed the orifice of the wound with his thumb, and stopped the flow as easily as if he had corked a bottle; after which he sprinkled the blood over the little boy's head. He then suspended the drum from his neck, and with two ivory drumsticks which were covered with strange carved letters and signs, he began beating a sort of reveille — he said to drum up the Shaman's "spirits."

Magical wonders

The bystanders, half shocked and half terrified at these extraordinary proceedings, eagerly, yet half timidly, crowded around him, and for a few moments a dead silence reigned throughout the lofty cavern. Nicholas, with his face livid and corpse-like, stood speechless as before.

And now the mesmerizer-magician had placed himself between the Shaman and the platform, and continued slowly drumming. The first notes were muffled, and vibrating so softly in the air that they awakened no echo; only the Shaman quickened still more his pendulum-like motion, and the child became restless. The mysterious drummer then began a low chant, slow, impressive and solemn.

As the unknown words issued from his lips, the flames of the torches, lamps and candles wavered and flickered, until they began dancing in rhythm with the chant. A

cold wind came wheezing from the dark corridors beyond the water, leaving a plaintive echo in its trail. Then a sort of nebulous vapour, which seemed to ooze from the rocky ground and walls, gathered about the Shaman and the boy. Around the latter the aura was silvery and transparent, but the cloud which enveloped the former was red and sinister. Approaching nearer the platform, the adept beat a louder call on his drum, and this time the echo caught it up with terrific effect. It reverberated near and far in incessant peals; one wail followed another, louder and louder, until the thundering roar seemed the chorus of a thousand demon voices rising from the fathomless depths of the dark lake. The water itself, whose tranquil surface, illuminated by many lights, had previously been smooth as a sheet of glass, became suddenly agitated, as if a powerful gust of wind had swept over its face.

Another chant and a roll of the drum, and the mountain trembled to its foundation with the cannon-like peals which rolled through the dark and distant corridors. The Shaman's body rose two yards in the air, and, nodding and swaying, he sat, self-suspended, like a hideous apparition. But the transformation which now occurred in the boy chilled everyone with fear as they speechlessly watched the scene. The silvery cloud about the child now seemed to lift him, too, into the air; but, *unlike the Shaman, his feet never left the ground.* The little boy began to grow as if the work of years was to be miraculously accomplished in a few seconds. He became tall and large, and his senile features grew older, in harmony with the body. A few more seconds and the youthful form had entirely disappeared: it *was totally absorbed in another individuality!* and, to the horror of those present who had been familiar with his appearance, this individuality was old Izvertzoff! . . .

The phantom

On his left temple was a large, gaping wound from which trickled great drops of blood. The phantom now moved directly in front of Nicholas, who, with his hair standing erect, gazed at his own son, transformed into his uncle, with the look of a raving madman. This sepulchral silence was broken by the Hungarian, who, addressing the child phantom, asked him in solemn voice: "In the name of Them who have all powers, answer the truth, and nothing but the truth. Restless soul, was thy body lost by accident, or foully murdered?"

The spectre's lips moved, but it was the echo from afar which answered in lugubrious shouts:

"Murdered! Murde-red! Mur-de-red!"

"Where? How? By whom?" asked the adept.

The apparition pointed a finger at Nicholas, and without removing its gaze or lowering its arm, retreated backward slowly towards the lake. At every step it took, the young Izvertzoff, as if compelled by some irresistible fascination, advanced a step toward it, until the phantom reached the edge of the water, and the next moment was seen gliding on its surface. It was a fearful, ghostly scene!

When Nicholas had come to within two steps of the brink of the watery abyss, a violent convulsion ran through the frame of the guilty man. Flinging himself upon his knees, he clung to one of the rustic seats with a desperate clutch, and, staring wild-

ly, uttered one long, piercing cry of agony, which rang through the ears of the crowd, but was unable to arouse even one of them from the lethargy into which they seemed all plunged. Like one in the clutches of a nightmare, they saw, heard, and remembered all, but were unable to stir a finger. The phantom now remained motionless on the water, and, bending its extended hand, slowly beckoned the assassin to come. Crouched in abject terror, the wretched man shrieked until the cavern rang again:

"I did not . . . no, I did not murder you! . . . "

Then came a splash, and now there was the boy in the dark water, struggling for his life in the middle of the lake, with the same motionless, stern apparition brooding over him, from whose very substance the child seemed to have dropped out.

"Papa! papa! save me! — I am drowning!" cried the piteous little voice amid the uproar of the echoes.

"My boy!" shrieked Nicholas in the accents of a maniac, springing to his feet, "My boy! save, oh, save him! . . . Yes, I confess — I am the murderer! . . . I killed him!"

"Killed . . . him . . . killed . . . killed! . . . " repeated hundreds of echoes like peals of laughter from a legion of infuriated demons.

Another splash, and the phantom suddenly disappeared. With one cry of unutterable terror the company, released from the spell which had hitherto paralyzed them, rushed toward the platform to the rescue of both father and child. But their feet were rooted to the ground anew as they beheld amid the swirling eddies a whitish, shapeless mass, an elongated mist, wrapping the murderer in tight embrace, and slowly sinking into the bottomless lake! . . .

On the morning after these occurrences, when, after a sleepless night, some of the party went to the residence of the Hungarian gentleman, they found it closed and deserted. He and the Shaman had disappeared. To add to the general consternation, the Izvertzoff mansion took fire on that same night, and was completely destroyed. The archbishop himself performed the ceremony of exorcism, but the locality is considered accursed to this day.

The government investigated the facts, and — ordered silence.

And now a few words in conclusion.¹ I hope that, whoever else may be disposed to question the possibility of an occurrence like the above, it will not be the intelligent Spiritualist. Not a feature in my narrative but finds in the records of mediumship its parallel. The apparition of the astral form like that of old Izvertzoff at the baptism is an everyday affair with clairvoyants. If the child was transformed into a man, in the sight of a crowd of people, so has a child-apparition been seen to emerge from Dr. Monck's side and many children to step out of William Eddy's cabinet. If elongation of the body occurred in the boy's case, the same thing is alleged of various mediums. If a "spirit" — according to the accepted phraseology, an "astral man" as we term it — crowding out the undeveloped soul of the newly-born *dual* creature, took possession of his body, so have hundreds of other earth-bound souls obsessed the bodies of mediums. Interchange of "souls" has been noticed in living men unacquainted with

¹ [These concluding remarks do not appear in the Russian version of the story. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

each other, and even residing at opposite points of the globe. This may happen either from disease, which generally loosens the bonds between the astral and the physical man, or in consequence of some other occult condition. The levitation of the Shaman is no more a matter of wonder; and if his "double" wandered from his entranced body, so has the same phenomenon been oft reported in Spiritualistic papers as happening under our own observation. This Russian episode but confirms what investigators of modern phenomena have experienced. In it, throughout a period of ten years, the whole plot is developed by a real disembodied "spirit." Earth-bound, he burned for a just but fiendish revenge, the planning and execution of which constituted certainly an insurmountable impediment to the progress and purification of the troubled soul. The "Elementals" play no part in my story, except when thrown into violent perturbation by the sounds of the magical drum and the *incantations* of the adept. The action of these creatures was limited to the flickering of the flames, the disturbance of the water in the lake, and the intensification of the awakened echoes. The phenomena at P * * * were produced and controlled by an adept-psychologist, working *for, with, and through* a disembodied soul, upon a deliberate plan for the accomplishment of a cruel vengeance, which, though charged to the account of the unhappy, restless astral man, yet accomplished the ends of the unerring law of Retribution in punishing the guilty and rescuing the innocent.

Let the Spiritualist who would pronounce magic an exploded superstition, compare the methods of the "magician" with those of the "circle." The latter derives its very name from the most common arrangement of the sitters. required by the "spirits" themselves. This is found *philosophical* and *necessary* by the Spiritualists. To ensure the formation of a circular magnetic current, the sitters are obliged to take hold of hands. Most generally the medium will complain of being affected if this magnetic chain is broken. Instances are known where instruments floating in the air have fallen upon the breaking of this current. The "magician" either draws with chalk a circle around the spot where the occult forces are to be concentrated to produce phenomena, as Baron Du Potet is known by all France to do — or forms one in thought, by *will power*; and this cannot be broken unless his WILL gives way. The rhythmic drum beats of the "magician" and his *incantations* are but another and more perfected form of the singing and music-playing of modern circles. In a word, the modern *séance* could be and should be made a school of magic, or philosophical, controllable Spiritualism. *Verb. sap.*¹

New York, 1878



¹ [Abbreviation of *verbum sapienti sat est*, Latin for "a word is enough to the wise."]