

"The Naked Guest" by John Farndon sample excerpt 2 page 1

Alex And then what?

Natalie ... he said Catherine now had the same pedicurist as me.

Alex Oh.

Natalie Oh Azya, then he leaned over and whispered in my ear...so loud that everyone heard.

Alex What?

Natalie He said, "So I know now that your body is more beautiful than my wife's." Of course, he was speaking in French, so he actually said *cor* – you know, corns – but everyone knew he meant *corps*.

Alex Did you tell Alexander Sergeevich this?

Natalie Yes...

Alex Poor Pushkin.

Natalie Alexander Sergeevich allows us to be treated so shamefully. If only he had not made so many enemies.

Alex They're simply jealous. He is a giant; they're dwarves.

Natalie Do you think I don't know? But they should acknowledge it.

Silence.

Oh Azya, he begged me not to go and I ignored him.

Alex Ssh. He's coming now. Oh God, he's singing. He must be drunk.

Enter Pushkin. He has his hands behind his back.

Pushkin *(singing)*

"God be your guide, on the long rough way!

No fear, praise God, that you go astray.

The night is clear and the moon is up.

Set down, set down the empty cup."

Good morning, my two little chickens. Did Danzas bring

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you home safely.

Alex Yes.

Pushkin He's a good man. I must thank him.

Alex Where have you been, Alexander Sergeyevich?

Pushkin I've been up in the sky, dancing on the treetops...

Alex We've been worried about you...

Pushkin ...and when I came down I landed in a snow drift.

He brings his hands out from behind his back and drops a snowball down Natalie's neck, then kisses her and reclines on the sofa beside her.

Have you been really worried? There was no need. I'm quite old enough to come home at four in the morning.

Alex You seemed so upset at the Vorontsovs'.

Pushkin Yes, I did, didn't I? But then I realized something. Twelve years ago, I wrote an epigram about Vorontsov.
"Half-bred, half-idiot and half-wit
Half-cock, half-scoundrel and half-cheat.
But rest assured – I'll bet on it –
Eventually he'll be complete."
Tonight Vorontsov was decent enough to fulfil his half of the bargain. I would have hated him to have proved me wrong.

Natalie Could you leave us, Azya?

Alexandra hesitates.

Pushkin Goodnight, Alexandra Nikolayevna. Sleep well, and don't worry.

Alex Goodnight, Nadenka. Goodnight, Alexander Sergeyevich.

Exit Alexandra. Natalie grasps Pushkin by the hands.

Natalie Oh Pushkin. You must believe me. I never encouraged

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d'Anthes. Not for a moment.

Pushkin embraces her.

Pushkin I know you didn't, Mrs Pushkin. I know.

Natalie We should never have gone. We should have stayed here by the stove as you said.

Pushkin No, of course we shouldn't.

Natalie We could have guessed that vile man would be there.

She leans on Pushkin's chest.

Pushkin It's alright, my angel. I have the answer.

She turns her face up to him.

Natalie Do you. Do you really?

Pushkin Yes.

As he goes to kiss her, she snuggles gently against his shoulder and he kisses her head.

Pushkin Yes, I do.

Natalie I'm so glad.

Silence.

Pushkin You are tired, Mrs Pushkin. Let me take you to bed.

He gently helps her up.

Natalie Yes I am. I am tired.

He leads her to he bedroom.

Pushkin Goodnight, Mrs Pushkin.

Natalie Goodnight, Pushkin. Don't stay up all night.

Exit Natalie. Pushkin goes at once to his desk and begins

"The Naked Guest" by John Farndon sample excerpt 2 page 4 writing...

Pushkin 'Monsieur le Baron!...

Man 2 'Pleasant, in spite of its compression,
Gentlemanly, quite precise,
Vladimir's challenge found expression
That, though polite, was clear as ice.'

Pushkin Well, sweet muse, I got that wrong then.
There's no finesse in my epistle.
Insults, spleen and coarse dismissal
Are flooding freely from my pen.
You pimp, you scab, you obscene old tart
I wildly call old Hekkeren.
Young d'Anthes had the pox, I reckon –
Bastard, coward, diseased upstart.
I can't be calm or dignified.
The man revolts me, fills me with disgust.
He drags me in the mire and I must
Spill his blood and flay his hide.

Muse But then this is no fireside poem
To chill and thrill the sleepy girls
To excite them as you stroke their curls
With the tragic fate of the young victim.
No, my friend, this is reality;
This is no game of words and rhyme.
There's nothing fake about fatality
Nothing poetic in a crime.
When d'Anthes fires his pistol at you
Real bullets will smack into your flesh
Shredding veins and ripping tissue
As muscles bloodily enmesh.
Real pain, you'll feel. True agony.
And the terror of the snatched for breath.
Oblivion will instantly
Engulf you as meet your death.
Don't deceive yourself an instant.
No poetic spirit will live on.
There is nothing from that moment.
Alexander Pushkin will be gone.

Pushkin '...he is nothing but a coward and a scoundrel. I am
therefore obliged to address myself to you, in order to ask

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you to put an end to all this scheming, if you wish avoid a further scandal, before which I shall certainly not shrink...I have the honour to be, Monsieur le Baron, your very humble and very obedient servant, Alexander Pushkin, 26 January 1837.