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**The  
Idiot  
by  
Fyodor  
Dostoevsky:**

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**The Idiot by Fyodor Dostoevsky:  
A Comprehensive Plot Retelling**

«Автор»

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The Idiot by Fyodor Dostoevsky follows Prince Myshkin, a kind and innocent man who returns to Russian society after treatment in Switzerland. His honesty and compassion contrast sharply with the greed, pride, and emotional turmoil of those around him. Becoming involved in complex relationships and tragic conflicts, Myshkin's presence exposes the moral instability of society. The novel explores themes of goodness, suffering, and the limits of human understanding.

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# The Idiot by Fyodor Dostoevsky: A Comprehensive Plot Retelling

## Глава

### Introduction

Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* is one of the most profound and psychologically complex novels of Russian literature. First published in 1868–1869, the novel explores the clash between spiritual purity and the moral corruption of society. At the center of the story stands Prince Lev Nikolayevich Myshkin, a kind, compassionate, and deeply sincere man whose innocence and goodness make him appear foolish in the eyes of others. Through his experiences, Dostoevsky examines fundamental questions about human nature, love, suffering, faith, and redemption.

Set in nineteenth-century Russia, the novel follows Myshkin's return from Switzerland, where he has spent several years receiving treatment for epilepsy. Entering the sophisticated yet morally troubled world of St. Petersburg society, he becomes involved in a web of complex relationships, rivalries, and emotional conflicts. His honesty and genuine concern for others contrast sharply with the selfishness, ambition, and hypocrisy surrounding him, creating dramatic tensions that drive the narrative forward.

The following retelling presents the major events of the novel in chronological order, highlighting the development of its principal characters and the tragic consequences of their choices. While preserving the essence of Dostoevsky's masterpiece, this summary aims to provide a clear and comprehensive account of the plot, allowing readers to follow the story's intricate events and appreciate the themes that have made *The Idiot* a timeless classic.

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Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* tells the story of Prince Lev Nikolayevich Myshkin, a young nobleman whose extraordinary kindness, honesty, and compassion set him apart from everyone around him. Written in 1868–1869, the novel explores what happens when a genuinely good person enters a society driven by pride, ambition, greed, vanity, and destructive passion. Through Myshkin's encounters with a wide range of characters, Dostoevsky creates a tragic story about innocence confronting the moral complexities of the world.

The story begins in late autumn when a train arrives in St. Petersburg from Western Europe. Among the passengers is Prince Myshkin, who has spent several years in Switzerland receiving treatment for epilepsy. Orphaned at an early age and plagued by illness throughout his youth, he has lived much of his life isolated from society. Although his treatment has improved his condition, he remains physically fragile and socially inexperienced.

In the train compartment, Myshkin meets Parfyon Rogozhin, a young merchant's son returning to St. Petersburg after the death of his wealthy father. Rogozhin is intense, impulsive, passionate, and emotionally unstable. During their conversation he reveals that he has become obsessed with a beautiful woman named Nastasya Filippovna Barashkova. He speaks of her with such overwhelming passion that Myshkin immediately senses the dangerous force of Rogozhin's emotions.

A third passenger, the talkative clerk Lebedev, joins their discussion. Through their conversation, the prince learns more about Rogozhin's infatuation and the scandalous reputation surrounding Nastasya Filippovna. This first meeting establishes one of the central relationships of the novel. Despite their vastly different personalities, Myshkin and Rogozhin feel an immediate connection. Rogozhin is drawn to the prince's sincerity, while Myshkin senses both the humanity and the darkness within Rogozhin.

Upon arriving in St. Petersburg, Myshkin goes directly to the home of General Epanchin. The prince is distantly related to the general's wife, Lizaveta Prokofyevna Epanchina. Having no money, no employment, and almost no acquaintances in Russia, he hopes to establish contact with his distant relatives.

The servants initially treat him with suspicion because of his shabby clothing and simple manner. However, his openness and honesty gradually win them over. When he finally meets General Epanchin, the prince explains his situation. The general is puzzled by his visitor's unusual combination of aristocratic birth, poverty, intelligence, and childlike sincerity.

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