

## CHAPTER XXII

Next day, having been invited by the count, Prince Andrew dined with the Rostóvs and spent the rest of the day there.

Everyone in the house realized for whose sake Prince Andrew came, and without concealing it he tried to be with Natásha all day. Not only in the soul of the frightened yet happy and enraptured Natásha, but in the whole house, there was a feeling of awe at something important that was bound to happen. The countess looked with sad and sternly serious eyes at Prince Andrew when he talked to Natásha and timidly started some artificial conversation about trifles as soon as he looked her way. Sónya was afraid to leave Natásha and afraid of being in the way when she was with them. Natásha grew pale, in a panic of expectation, when she remained alone with him for a moment. Prince Andrew surprised her by his timidity. She felt that he wanted to say something to her but could not bring himself to do so.

In the evening, when Prince Andrew had left, the countess went up to Natásha and whispered: "Well, what?"

"Mamma! For heaven's sake don't ask me anything now! One can't talk about that," said Natásha.

But all the same that night Natásha, now agitated and now frightened, lay a long time in her mother's bed gazing straight before her. She told her how he had complimented her, how he told her he was going abroad, asked her where they were going to spend the summer, and then how he had asked her about Borís.

"But such a... such a... never happened to me before!" she said. "Only I feel afraid in his presence. I am always afraid when I'm with him. What does that mean? Does it mean that it's the real thing? Yes? Mamma, are you asleep?"

"No, my love; I am frightened myself," answered her mother. "Now go!"

"All the same I shan't sleep. What silliness, to sleep! Mummy! Mummy! such a thing never happened to me before," she said, surprised and alarmed at the feeling she was aware of in herself. "And could we ever have thought!..."

It seemed to Natásha that even at the time she first saw Prince Andrew at Otrádnoe she had fallen in love with him. It was as if she feared this strange, unexpected happiness of meeting again the very man she had then chosen (she was firmly convinced she had done so) and of finding him, as it seemed, not indifferent to her.

"And it had to happen that he should come specially to Petersburg while we are here. And it had to happen that we should meet at that ball. It is fate. Clearly it is fate that everything led up to this! Already then, directly I saw him I felt something peculiar."

“What else did he say to you? What are those verses? Read them...” said her mother, thoughtfully, referring to some verses Prince Andrew had written in Natásha’s album.

“Mamma, one need not be ashamed of his being a widower?”

“Don’t, Natásha! Pray to God. ‘Marriages are made in heaven,’” said her mother.

“Darling Mummy, how I love you! How happy I am!” cried Natásha, shedding tears of joy and excitement and embracing her mother.

At that very time Prince Andrew was sitting with Pierre and telling him of his love for Natásha and his firm resolve to make her his wife.

That day Countess Hélène had a reception at her house. The French ambassador was there, and a foreign prince of the blood who had of late become a frequent visitor of hers, and many brilliant ladies and gentlemen. Pierre, who had come downstairs, walked through the rooms and struck everyone by his preoccupied, absent-minded, and morose air.

Since the ball he had felt the approach of a fit of nervous depression and had made desperate efforts to combat it. Since the intimacy of his wife with the royal prince, Pierre had unexpectedly been made a gentleman of the bedchamber, and from that time he had begun to feel oppressed and ashamed in court society, and dark thoughts of the vanity of all things human came to him oftener than before. At the same time the feeling he had noticed between his protégée Natásha and Prince Andrew accentuated his gloom by the contrast between his own position and his friend’s. He tried equally to avoid thinking about his wife, and about Natásha and Prince Andrew; and again everything seemed to him insignificant in comparison with eternity; again the question: for what? presented itself; and he forced himself to work day and night at Masonic labors, hoping to drive away the evil spirit that threatened him. Toward midnight, after he had left the countess’ apartments, he was sitting upstairs in a shabby dressing gown, copying out the original transaction of the Scottish lodge of Freemasons at a table in his low room cloudy with tobacco smoke, when someone came in. It was Prince Andrew.

“Ah, it’s you!” said Pierre with a preoccupied, dissatisfied air.

“And I, you see, am hard at it.” He pointed to his manuscript book with that air of escaping from the ills of life with which unhappy people look at their work.

Prince Andrew, with a beaming, ecstatic expression of renewed life on his face, paused in front of Pierre and, not noticing his sad look, smiled at him with the egotism of joy.

“Well, dear heart,” said he, “I wanted to tell you about it yesterday and I have come to do so today. I never experienced anything like it before. I am in love, my friend!”

Suddenly Pierre heaved a deep sigh and dumped his heavy person down on

the sofa beside Prince Andrew.

“With Natásha Rostóva, yes?” said he.

“Yes, yes! Who else should it be? I should never have believed it, but the feeling is stronger than I. Yesterday I tormented myself and suffered, but I would not exchange even that torment for anything in the world, I have not lived till now. At last I live, but I can’t live without her! But can she love me?... I am too old for her.... Why don’t you speak?”

“I? I? What did I tell you?” said Pierre suddenly, rising and beginning to pace up and down the room. “I always thought it.... That girl is such a treasure... she is a rare girl.... My dear friend, I entreat you, don’t philosophize, don’t doubt, marry, marry, marry.... And I am sure there will not be a happier man than you.”

“But what of her?”

“She loves you.”

“Don’t talk rubbish...” said Prince Andrew, smiling and looking into Pierre’s eyes.

“She does, I know,” Pierre cried fiercely.

“But do listen,” returned Prince Andrew, holding him by the arm. “Do you know the condition I am in? I must talk about it to someone.”

“Well, go on, go on. I am very glad,” said Pierre, and his face really changed, his brow became smooth, and he listened gladly to Prince Andrew. Prince Andrew seemed, and really was, quite a different, quite a new man. Where was his spleen, his contempt for life, his disillusionment? Pierre was the only person to whom he made up his mind to speak openly; and to him he told all that was in his soul. Now he boldly and lightly made plans for an extended future, said he could not sacrifice his own happiness to his father’s caprice, and spoke of how he would either make his father consent to this marriage and love her, or would do without his consent; then he marveled at the feeling that had mastered him as at something strange, apart from and independent of himself.

“I should not have believed anyone who told me that I was capable of such love,” said Prince Andrew. “It is not at all the same feeling that I knew in the past. The whole world is now for me divided into two halves: one half is she, and there all is joy, hope, light: the other half is everything where she is not, and there is all gloom and darkness....”

“Darkness and gloom,” reiterated Pierre: “yes, yes, I understand that.”

“I cannot help loving the light, it is not my fault. And I am very

happy! You understand me? I know you are glad for my sake.”

“Yes, yes,” Pierre assented, looking at his friend with a touched and sad expression in his eyes. The brighter Prince Andrew’s lot appeared to him, the gloomier seemed his own.