

## CHAPTER XII

When they all drove back from Pelagéya Danílovna's, Natásha, who always saw and noticed everything, arranged that she and Madame Schoss should go back in the sleigh with Dimmler, and Sónya with Nicholas and the maids.

On the way back Nicholas drove at a steady pace instead of racing and kept peering by that fantastic all-transforming light into Sónya's face and searching beneath the eyebrows and mustache for his former and his present Sónya from whom he had resolved never to be parted again. He looked and recognizing in her both the old and the new Sónya, and being reminded by the smell of burnt cork of the sensation of her kiss, inhaled the frosty air with a full breast and, looking at the ground flying beneath him and at the sparkling sky, felt himself again in fairyland.

"Sónya, is it well with thee?" he asked from time to time.

"Yes!" she replied. "And with thee?"

When halfway home Nicholas handed the reins to the coachman and ran for a moment to Natásha's sleigh and stood on its wing.

"Natásha!" he whispered in French, "do you know I have made up my mind about Sónya?"

"Have you told her?" asked Natásha, suddenly beaming all over with joy.

"Oh, how strange you are with that mustache and those eyebrows!... Natásha—are you glad?"

"I am so glad, so glad! I was beginning to be vexed with you. I did not tell you, but you have been treating her badly. What a heart she has, Nicholas! I am horrid sometimes, but I was ashamed to be happy while Sónya was not," continued Natásha. "Now I am so glad! Well, run back to her."

"No, wait a bit.... Oh, how funny you look!" cried Nicholas, peering into her face and finding in his sister too something new, unusual, and bewitchingly tender that he had not seen in her before. "Natásha, it's magical, isn't it?"

"Yes," she replied. "You have done splendidly."

"Had I seen her before as she is now," thought Nicholas, "I should long ago have asked her what to do and have done whatever she told me, and all would have been well."

"So you are glad and I have done right?"

"Oh, quite right! I had a quarrel with Mamma some time ago about it.

Mamma said she was angling for you. How could she say such a thing! I nearly stormed at Mamma. I will never let anyone say anything bad of Sónya, for there is nothing but good in her.”

“Then it’s all right?” said Nicholas, again scrutinizing the expression of his sister’s face to see if she was in earnest. Then he jumped down and, his boots scrunching the snow, ran back to his sleigh. The same happy, smiling Circassian, with mustache and beaming eyes looking up from under a sable hood, was still sitting there, and that Circassian was Sónya, and that Sónya was certainly his future happy and loving wife.

When they reached home and had told their mother how they had spent the evening at the Melyukóvs’, the girls went to their bedroom. When they had undressed, but without washing off the cork mustaches, they sat a long time talking of their happiness. They talked of how they would live when they were married, how their husbands would be friends, and how happy they would be. On Natásha’s table stood two looking glasses which Dunyásha had prepared beforehand.

“Only when will all that be? I am afraid never.... It would be too good!” said Natásha, rising and going to the looking glasses.

“Sit down, Natásha; perhaps you’ll see him,” said Sónya.

Natásha lit the candles, one on each side of one of the looking glasses, and sat down.

“I see someone with a mustache,” said Natásha, seeing her own face.

“You mustn’t laugh, Miss,” said Dunyásha.

With Sónya’s help and the maid’s, Natásha got the glass she held into the right position opposite the other; her face assumed a serious expression and she sat silent. She sat a long time looking at the receding line of candles reflected in the glasses and expecting (from tales she had heard) to see a coffin, or him, Prince Andrew, in that last dim, indistinctly outlined square. But ready as she was to take the smallest speck for the image of a man or of a coffin, she saw nothing. She began blinking rapidly and moved away from the looking glasses.

“Why is it others see things and I don’t?” she said. “You sit down now, Sónya. You absolutely must, tonight! Do it for me.... Today I feel so frightened!”

Sónya sat down before the glasses, got the right position, and began looking.

“Now, Miss Sónya is sure to see something,” whispered Dunyásha; “while you do nothing but laugh.”

Sónya heard this and Natásha’s whisper:

“I know she will. She saw something last year.”

For about three minutes all were silent.

“Of course she will!” whispered Natásha, but did not finish... suddenly Sónya pushed away the glass she was holding and covered her eyes with her hand.

“Oh, Natásha!” she cried.

“Did you see? Did you? What was it?” exclaimed Natásha, holding up the looking glass.

Sónya had not seen anything, she was just wanting to blink and to get up when she heard Natásha say, “Of course she will!” She did not wish to disappoint either Dunyásha or Natásha, but it was hard to sit still. She did not herself know how or why the exclamation escaped her when she covered her eyes.

“You saw him?” urged Natásha, seizing her hand.

“Yes. Wait a bit... I... saw him,” Sónya could not help saying, not yet knowing whom Natásha meant by him, Nicholas or Prince Andrew.

“But why shouldn’t I say I saw something? Others do see! Besides who can tell whether I saw anything or not?” flashed through Sónya’s mind.

“Yes, I saw him,” she said.

“How? Standing or lying?”

“No, I saw... At first there was nothing, then I saw him lying down.”

“Andrew lying? Is he ill?” asked Natásha, her frightened eyes fixed on her friend.

“No, on the contrary, on the contrary! His face was cheerful, and he turned to me.” And when saying this she herself fancied she had really seen what she described.

“Well, and then, Sónya?...”

“After that, I could not make out what there was; something blue and red....”

“Sónya! When will he come back? When shall I see him! O, God, how afraid I am for him and for myself and about everything!...” Natásha began, and without replying to Sónya’s words of comfort she got into bed, and long after her candle was out lay open-eyed and motionless, gazing at the moonlight through the frosty windowpanes.