

CHAPTER XIX

From the day his wife arrived in Moscow Pierre had been intending to go away somewhere, so as not to be near her. Soon after the Rostóvs came to Moscow the effect Natásha had on him made him hasten to carry out his intention. He went to Tver to see Joseph Alexéevich's widow, who had long since promised to hand over to him some papers of her deceased husband's.

When he returned to Moscow Pierre was handed a letter from Márya Dmítrievna asking him to come and see her on a matter of great importance relating to Andrew Bolkónski and his betrothed. Pierre had been avoiding Natásha because it seemed to him that his feeling for her was stronger than a married man's should be for his friend's fiancée. Yet some fate constantly threw them together.

"What can have happened? And what can they want with me?" thought he as he dressed to go to Márya Dmítrievna's. "If only Prince Andrew would hurry up and come and marry her!" thought he on his way to the house.

On the Tverskóy Boulevard a familiar voice called to him.

"Pierre! Been back long?" someone shouted. Pierre raised his head. In a sleigh drawn by two gray trotting-horses that were bespattering the dashboard with snow, Anatole and his constant companion Makárin dashed past. Anatole was sitting upright in the classic pose of military dandies, the lower part of his face hidden by his beaver collar and his head slightly bent. His face was fresh and rosy, his white-plumed hat, tilted to one side, disclosed his curled and pomaded hair besprinkled with powdery snow.

"Yes, indeed, that's a true sage," thought Pierre. "He sees nothing beyond the pleasure of the moment, nothing troubles him and so he is always cheerful, satisfied, and serene. What wouldn't I give to be like him!" he thought enviously.

In Márya Dmítrievna's anteroom the footman who helped him off with his fur coat said that the mistress asked him to come to her bedroom.

When he opened the ballroom door Pierre saw Natásha sitting at the window, with a thin, pale, and spiteful face. She glanced round at him, frowned, and left the room with an expression of cold dignity.

"What has happened?" asked Pierre, entering Márya Dmítrievna's room.

"Fine doings!" answered Dmítrievna. "For fifty-eight years have I lived in this world and never known anything so disgraceful!"

And having put him on his honor not to repeat anything she told him, Márya Dmítrievna informed him that Natásha had refused Prince Andrew without her parents' knowledge and that the cause of this was Anatole Kurágin into whose society Pierre's wife had thrown her and with whom Natásha had tried to elope during her father's absence, in order to be

married secretly.

Pierre raised his shoulders and listened open-mouthed to what was told him, scarcely able to believe his own ears. That Prince Andrew's deeply loved affianced wife—the same Natásha Rostóva who used to be so charming—should give up Bolkónski for that fool Anatole who was already secretly married (as Pierre knew), and should be so in love with him as to agree to run away with him, was something Pierre could not conceive and could not imagine.

He could not reconcile the charming impression he had of Natásha, whom he had known from a child, with this new conception of her baseness, folly, and cruelty. He thought of his wife. “They are all alike!” he said to himself, reflecting that he was not the only man unfortunate enough to be tied to a bad woman. But still he pitied Prince Andrew to the point of tears and sympathized with his wounded pride, and the more he pitied his friend the more did he think with contempt and even with disgust of that Natásha who had just passed him in the ballroom with such a look of cold dignity. He did not know that Natásha's soul was overflowing with despair, shame, and humiliation, and that it was not her fault that her face happened to assume an expression of calm dignity and severity.

“But how get married?” said Pierre, in answer to Márya Dmítrievna. “He could not marry—he is married!”

“Things get worse from hour to hour!” ejaculated Márya Dmítrievna. “A nice youth! What a scoundrel! And she's expecting him—expecting him since yesterday. She must be told! Then at least she won't go on expecting him.”

After hearing the details of Anatole's marriage from Pierre, and giving vent to her anger against Anatole in words of abuse, Márya Dmítrievna told Pierre why she had sent for him. She was afraid that the count or Bolkónski, who might arrive at any moment, if they knew of this affair (which she hoped to hide from them) might challenge Anatole to a duel, and she therefore asked Pierre to tell his brother-in-law in her name to leave Moscow and not dare to let her set eyes on him again. Pierre—only now realizing the danger to the old count, Nicholas, and Prince Andrew—promised to do as she wished. Having briefly and exactly explained her wishes to him, she let him go to the drawing room.

“Mind, the count knows nothing. Behave as if you know nothing either,” she said. “And I will go and tell her it is no use expecting him! And stay to dinner if you care to!” she called after Pierre.

Pierre met the old count, who seemed nervous and upset. That morning Natásha had told him that she had rejected Bolkónski.

“Troubles, troubles, my dear fellow!” he said to Pierre. “What troubles one has with these girls without their mother! I do so regret having come here.... I will be frank with you. Have you heard she has broken off her engagement without consulting anybody? It's true this engagement never was much to my liking. Of course he is an excellent man, but

still, with his father's disapproval they wouldn't have been happy, and Natásha won't lack suitors. Still, it has been going on so long, and to take such a step without father's or mother's consent! And now she's ill, and God knows what! It's hard, Count, hard to manage daughters in their mother's absence...."

Pierre saw that the count was much upset and tried to change the subject, but the count returned to his troubles.

Sónya entered the room with an agitated face.

"Natásha is not quite well; she's in her room and would like to see you. Márya Dmítrievna is with her and she too asks you to come."

"Yes, you are a great friend of Bolkónski's, no doubt she wants to send him a message," said the count. "Oh dear! Oh dear! How happy it all was!"

And clutching the spare gray locks on his temples the count left the room.

When Márya Dmítrievna told Natásha that Anatole was married, Natásha did not wish to believe it and insisted on having it confirmed by Pierre himself. Sónya told Pierre this as she led him along the corridor to Natásha's room.

Natásha, pale and stern, was sitting beside Márya Dmítrievna, and her eyes, glittering feverishly, met Pierre with a questioning look the moment he entered. She did not smile or nod, but only gazed fixedly at him, and her look asked only one thing: was he a friend, or like the others an enemy in regard to Anatole? As for Pierre, he evidently did not exist for her.

"He knows all about it," said Márya Dmítrievna pointing to Pierre and addressing Natásha. "Let him tell you whether I have told the truth."

Natásha looked from one to the other as a hunted and wounded animal looks at the approaching dogs and sportsmen.

"Natálya Ilyníchna," Pierre began, dropping his eyes with a feeling of pity for her and loathing for the thing he had to do, "whether it is true or not should make no difference to you, because..."

"Then it is not true that he's married!"

"Yes, it is true."

"Has he been married long?" she asked. "On your honor?..."

Pierre gave his word of honor.

"Is he still here?" she asked, quickly.

"Yes, I have just seen him."

She was evidently unable to speak and made a sign with her hands that they should leave her alone.