



The Love of Jeanne Ney

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THE GRIFFIN

*is the colophon of a series of novels by continental authors
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back of this volume.*

THE LOVE OF
JEANNE NEY

BY ILYA EHRENBURG

WITHDRAWN

TRANSLATED BY
HELEN CHROUSCHOFF MATHESON

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GARDEN CITY MCMXXX NEW YORK

DOUBLEDAY, DORAN

AND COMPANY, INC.

ALSO TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH:

JULIO JURENITO

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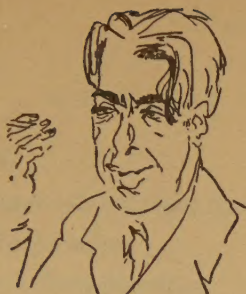
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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES AT  
THE COUNTRY LIFE PRESS  
GARDEN CITY, N. Y.

FIRST EDITION



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### ILYA EHRENBURG

Born a Jew in Moscow thirty-eight years ago, Ilya Ehrenbourg spent his childhood in a suburban brewery, stale with the odor of hot sour beer. There were months in prison, beatings, hunger strikes and finally an order of lifelong banishment which prefaced a trek across Russia. Ehrenbourg tramped across most of Europe, often hungry five or six days together. During the war he wrote "Poems About Foreshadowings" which even in those chaotic days won recognition. Then came the Revolution. Under four governments he was buffeted from place to place, escaping pogroms and prisons, fleeing from fantastic danger. In 1921 Ehrenbourg left Russia and after many wanderings returned to Paris where he sits in a café working and smoking his pipe. Here he has written *Julio Jurenito*, *The Love of Jeanne Ney* and perhaps a half dozen other books which have made him known on the Continent as one of the two or three most brilliant and dynamic of the young moderns.

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*The Love of Jeanne Ney*





## I

### *Castor and Pollux*

THE whole house had been without electricity for the last fortnight. There was only the stinking wick, floating in a saucer of oil, by which Mme Nechensohn was cooking Milanese pancakes, the glimmer from which was so feeble that it barely revealed the hollow, unshaven cheeks of Halibieff and the large frying pan full of batter. Halibieff sadly gave the pancake a poke and muttered "I'm through . . . Kursk . . . By the time our people get out I expect there'll be nothing left of me but my beard, and that'll be underground."

Little Nechensohn rolled toward the door like a ball, opened it, shut it, reopened it, and shut it again. Having apparently calmed down somewhat, he whispered, "The superintendent and one of the girl spies from the Common Lodging House Cell<sup>1</sup> are here. Why should I talk about Kursk when I've already been there four times?—at least, not to Kursk, but inside. I'll show you the *News*. Where is your Kursk, I ask you? There is no Kursk. But just you listen to this: 'By order of the All Russian Extraordinary Commission (that's just where I was) No. 1, Ivan Obouhoff, an officer of the White Guards; No. 6, Moses Spitz, for illegal speculation; No. 19 Adolph Blühm, for intercourse with Monarchists.' Do you know how many numbers there are? Exactly eighty-four. That beats your Kursk."

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<sup>1</sup>The Cell is the unit of Communist organization.

"You won't frighten me with that kind of thing, Brother! I'm not that sort. You'd better read me the news from the front."

"The front? Which front? Who cares for the front? Thank God, you're not called up, are you? News? Here's news for you. On card No. 47 you can get half a pound of vegetable fat. That's one. Three quarters of a pound of bread. That's two. A pound of rice. That's three. Of course, when all is said and done it's not exactly exciting."

"Oh, stop repeating that Bolshevik nonsense. I'm Halibieff, and I don't sell my principles for a pound of rice. By the way, could you find me a bite of something? I've not had a morsel since I was let out. It's enough to make one ask to be sent back to prison."

"A bite? You say that in Moscow in 1919?"

Nevertheless Nechensohn rose. Friendship is a great thing. It was many years since Stepan Feodorovitch Istomin, dropping in to see them in the little office in Cherkessoff Lane which housed the bank of Halibieff and Nechensohn, found Nechensohn trying to persuade an asthmatic old lady to buy some shares in a mine called Everse, of which no one had ever heard, while Halibieff, nervously twisting his fingers, added in a deep bass obbligato, "The most profitable and promising concern. As a gentleman, I give you my word, twenty-eight per cent."

And ever since Istomin had called them Castor and Pollux. A wise saying, perhaps a true one.

Istomin had maintained a diplomatic silence about the incident after hearing that the asthmatic lady and the mythical mine had disappeared forever, together with a good many other things. They had met at the Hunters' Club, where Halibieff was drinking three-star brandy to the memory of the dead, while the abstemious Nechensohn sat watching him affectionately. In the lobby it had been

Nechensohn himself, and not the hall porter, who had guided Halibieff's arms into the sleeves of his overcoat.

Halibieff's thin, tense, nervous hands were in striking contrast to those of Nechensohn, with their ten podgy digits that looked like bloated leeches whose sole happiness lay in sucking money. They were a contrast in every way, but this very dissimilarity only intensified the pathos of such deep devotion as has become a great rarity in our days.

The sole capital of the bank had been Nechensohn's cunning brain and Halibieff's rapidity of decision. Nechensohn, it is true, could invent schemes as well as anyone, but he was frightened by his own inventions. Halibieff put heart into him by the twist of his mustache, by his aristocratic origin, by his voice, his friendly relations with the police—by all those characteristics which go to the making of a true son of Moscow.

Nechensohn? Well, as a matter of fact, Nechensohn hadn't even a legal permit to live in Moscow. Alone, he would never have dared to raise his voice. But, together, they had started their bank, and behind its glass partitions Nechensohn's brilliant brain, hidden beneath his too oily curls, found abundant scope for enterprise. Why did the envious talk of capital? There was no need for it. Old ladies, indeed!—Why, even that well-to-do rascal from Polyana had been caught in their net and had worked for the glory of their bank instead of restoring his parish church. He had died a year later from heart failure in spite of the way he dosed himself with sedatives.

In the course of the war Nechensohn, as though with the voice of inspiration, said, "*Lei*."<sup>1</sup> And Rumania did not disappoint them. At his club Halibieff, who was fond of punning, would say, "*Lei*, and I lay heavy odds on it."

All this went on until October. Then came the familiar

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<sup>1</sup>*Lei* is a Rumanian coin.

picture of ruin, and when the gilt letters B A N K were replaced on the window by a half sheet, torn from a copy-book, bearing the contemptible word, "*Crèche*," all respectable persons, among whom of course our friends counted themselves, felt that the end had come.

It is true that Nechensohn tried buying up the jewelry of elderly ladies, but he did it without conviction or enthusiasm, and indeed somewhat clumsily. The situation was saved only by his unimaginative wife's trading in crude alcohol.

Halibieff was sent to the Boutirka prison, where it looked as though he might have to make a long stay, and where he was not particularly uncomfortable. He was confined for a year, during which time he played cards with a curly-haired anarchist. At one of their haphazard examinations, the friends proved that they had not forgotten each other, even though separated. Halibieff nervously declared (he did everything nervously) that Nechensohn was a Rumanian, perhaps even a Rumanian agent, otherwise the whole *lei* episode was inexplicable.

Nechensohn began by calling Halibieff a bit of a rogue (he showed his friendliness by saying "a bit of"), and later used the now current expression, "feudal."

However, the magistrate did not trouble to take down their statements, and soon afterwards decided that they had better be cleared out to make way for others. There are magistrates like that.

So they met. They embraced, and is it any wonder that Pollux could not refuse Castor's request?

From under a heap of dirty clothes he fished out two French rolls. It looked as though that was to be the extent of the feast: but, disregarding the privacy of the place, the sharp-eyed Halibieff plunged his hand quickly among a heap of shirts and the like, and triumphantly extracted thence a bottle of spirits. Halibieff swallowed one cupful



after another. Nechensohn carefully broke bits off the edge of his roll, thinking all the time. The silence was so significant that Halibieff guessed the trend of his friend's thoughts and was therefore not surprised when he suddenly heard "Got it," the exclamation which had been so familiar in the office.

He snuggled close up to the philosopher. The wick was guttering and flickering. Nechensohn's whisper penetrated the silence. Had the door been opened at that moment by the house superintendent or the girl spy from the Cell, they would certainly have thought a conspiracy was in progress. "You are there, I am here. It's an Armenian riddle called 'Halibieff and Nechensohn' "

"What do you mean by 'you are there'?"

"Clear as day. In the Cell."

"You change your principles pretty quickly, you do."

"What in the world have principles got to do with it? I like your 'pretty quickly.' What about the government? Did it take ten years to change? Not a bit of it. It took exactly ten minutes. And I, like an idiot, have lost two whole years. I was shut up, inside. You think it's bad, inside. So it is, very bad. But outside it can be very good indeed. For example, a man can drive about in a car and say with the utmost affability, 'Now, Citizen Nechensohn, please go inside.' That's quite another matter. So I'll stay here. But you never can tell, and for all we know, Denikin may turn up. So we'll insure ourselves. You're a noble, so naturally you have principles. There is every reason for you to clear out. And then——"

Halibieff burst out laughing. The sound of his laughter was a tribute to Mme Nechensohn. Her alcohol was alcohol.

"Splendid. Each of us his own Hindenburg. Strategy! A sort of roulette. This isn't communism, old man: it's fate, it's gambling. You back the red, and I back the black. Very well. On with the game. No loss possible. We can't

lose. And then, excuse me for saying so because I've suffered so much, then we'll kill everything that calls itself a Jew. You? No, not you. They'll squeal, but you'll go to the Empire and drink coffee. We'll open the office again. We'll buy gold. We'll have a good time. As for them—well, you'll have to see to that. All right? Is it a bargain?"

Halibieff drank off another cupful. He no longer took any notice of Nechensohn's warning signals, but shouted at the top of his voice, "I'm through with this. My life is being wasted. What do I want with revolution? In Paris everything is lit up now, cafés, ogling women, and here are you talking about food cards. The devil take it all, I'm not that sort of man. Champagne! Women! Do you realize what a woman is? An expensive woman with lace? I was in the Boutirka prison for a whole year feeding lice. I'm a gambler. I'm ready for any risk."

The wick flickered out. The bottle upset. Halibieff rose with difficulty. Nechensohn helped him up affectionately.

"Only be quiet! For God's sake be quiet. The superintendent has come."

"What do I care? I'm ready for anything. You don't know what sort of man I am, Nechensohn. I want women. I haven't been in a restaurant for two years. I can kill with my own hands."

"Kill? How do you mean, kill? You can't do that. Do you hear, Halibieff? You can't. If a man gets in your way—you fix it up so that he hangs himself legally. But kill—that's terrible."

"Yes, Nechensohn, you're right. It is terrible. But I will kill; maybe a colt, maybe a man. I don't know myself of what I am capable. But I want music. I want someone to sing to me. I can do anything."

And, stunned by the alcohol, he fell across the knees of the gentle Pollux.

## II

### *Sometimes Winter—Sometimes Spring*

JEANNE walked far beyond the quarantine boundary. All around her were low brown hills, with the sea below them. Jeanne felt happy. Something very important had happened to-day. According to the calendar it was winter. No newspaper had recorded what had happened. It was something that had not ruffled her father's equanimity, though he sedulously followed the record of current events.

Only yesterday it had been really winter, cold enough to catch one's breath, and to bring tears into one's eyes. All yesterday Jeanne had been miserable, longing only to merge her identity in that of the painted tiles of the stove. Then, at dawn, a warm breeze sprang up from the sea. The Neys' servant, the waggish, pug-nosed Vanya, had thrown all the windows wide open, had sniffed the air like a dog, and begun to whistle. Casting off all thought of the privations and misfortunes that the beleaguered Crimea had been compelled to suffer, the women of the little quarantine quarter had carried out their pots and pans and stoves to their yards or to the street side. There they hummed while busying themselves over their stews of peas or salt fish; gayly flitting about so as not to miss a single ray of sunshine. Even the sea had made haste to change its dress, and the bottle green of the provincial tragédienne had given place to the pale blue of the girlish ingénue.

Stirred and astonished by this premature spring, Jeanne strolled carelessly along the muddy clay road, now and

then stepping into puddles. A further cause of her happiness was that Papa, on opening his shrunken little yellow newspaper this morning, had said: "Well, that finishes it; we shall soon be on the run from here, and that means Paris in the near future. It's warm there: it's always warm there. And that'll be the end for us of this nightmare that they call Russia."

It had been a prolonged nightmare. It had oppressed Jeanne for six years. She was just as much afraid of it now as she had been on that far-away February morning when, as a girl of thirteen, she walked out into the square of the Brest station carrying a frozen bunch of mimosa, the parting gift of the laughing friends who had seen her off. There she had stood, gazing at the snow, the sheepskin coats, the women, the policeman with his hood shouting at a moribund cabman, and she had burst into tears in spite of the words of encouragement murmured by her father: "Never mind, this is a rich, a very rich, country."

Jeanne was afraid of Russia. In the mental pictures which she made of it everything was inextricably interwoven: the climate—not the weather—but the climate, as though in a geography book; the wholly unmanageable sounds of the language; the sheepskins; the horsemen smelling of vodka; the general rubbing his purple nose in the frost; the pancakes; the incessant tea drinking; the singing, sometimes a drunken hiccough and sometimes a doglike howl.

Until she was seventeen she had managed to seclude herself. There was a pink bedroom, and on Jeanne's writing-table lay a volume of Hugo; there was a little vase full of roses from Noeff's shop, which whispered of dear France as sweetly as Hugo himself, as though defying the breath of Russia which dimmed the window. Then there was the dining room where Papa, sipping his red Bordeaux, read every evening with the same emotion the leaders of the

*Journal des Débats*, which were all exactly alike. There were actually people who knew Hugo by heart and yet preferred Moscow to Paris!

But later? Later something strange came about. It seemed to Jeanne that Russia suddenly assumed immense proportions, swallowing up the pink room, the *Journal des Débats*, and the elegant young men who sent roses from Noeff's shop. Jeanne could not understand. People said, "Revolution." But Jeanne had learned French history at school, and to her mind Revolution was something enchanting: magnificent speeches which had inspired Hugo; the Marseillaise; fêtes; the heroic death of a gallant young standard bearer marching against the coalition. But the people in barbaric fur caps who came to search the Neys' flat, to smoke their tobacco in Jeanne's room, to rummage through her drawers and read her childish diary; the trembling ladies of the "house committee" who had to keep watch at the entrance; the food cards which one held in one's frozen hands in the queues—what resemblance had all this to Hugo's poems or the paintings in the Louvre?

Jeanne smiled at the sun and drove away her distressing memories: that flight by night in a peasant's cart, hidden under straw; the hut, six days in that hut; those men who wanted to kill Papa for a charm on his watch chain; the crowd at Rostoff with the typhus patients all mixed up in it; another flight, a barge, people drowning, a storm; and then finally these grim and drab weeks at Theodosia, with the roistering drunken songs of the Cossacks and the bitter north wind as an accompanying refrain.

All this had really happened. But it was better to pretend that it had not, better to pretend that she was already back in France, that this spring day was not just a miracle but that spring had indeed come. Soon she would be in Paris.



Jeanne laughed aloud like a child.

"Very pleasant, if I may say so, to meet a gay young lady in these wretched days."

Beside Jeanne stood a red-headed officer in a round fur cap. She gave a little scream of fright and hurried on. But a heavy hairy hand grasped her shoulder. She could smell the man's disgusting alcoholic breath.

"Let me go! How dare you! I am a foreigner. I am French."

"That makes it all the pleasanter. You've no idea how tired I am of Russian females. A Frenchwoman now—quite chic, a *cocotte*, a regular *Château des Fleurs* . . ."

Jeanne thrust the roisterer aside, but slipped herself and fell on the greasy path. At the same moment she heard a strange voice: "Permit me to ask you what this is all about, Lieutenant."

Someone carefully helped her up. In front of her stood, not her assailant, but another officer, smiling at her.

It had all happened so quickly that instead of thanking this rescuer who seemed to have sprung from nowhere, Jeanne, in sheer nervousness, began to rub the clay off her muddy dress. Quite simply and efficiently the stranger helped her just as though they had been old friends taking a walk together.

At last, unable to keep it up any longer, he smiled. "Don't you recognize me, Jeanne?"

"Andrew!"

Pleased as he had been by the chance meeting, Andrew felt his pleasure intensified by what seemed so easy to read on Jeanne's face—it was something more than gratitude, more than agitation—was it tenderness? Was it true then that she had not quite forgotten him?

Five years ago, during that last summer before the out-



break of this awful Revolution that seemed to have been planned on purpose to spoil her best years, Jeanne had made the acquaintance of the young student at a country villa near Moscow. He too loved the hot sun, the rolling rrrs of Hugo's verses, the sickly sweet scent of red roses.

Or perhaps he merely pretended to love all these things, because his adolescence and the prevalence of spring led him subconsciously to love the dark, shy, mischievous, foreign child, ready at fifteen to play Racine's Phèdre, yet still so much a child that she was inclined to cry if she felt that she had been awkward.

All that was long ago. He used to row her about on the Tsaritsin lake. He seemed to remember that, on one evening, when they were going past the neat little villa gardens ornamented with large shining globes on pedestals, and the dusk was sweet with the fragrance of stocks, he had kissed her cheek. But perhaps he had not. Perhaps he had only wanted to, and had merely bent down and said something trivial and unimportant about a game of croquet. Neither of them was sure. They did not think much about love. Love played no more important part in their lives than their favorite books, or croquet, or flowers. They were still children. Later on Jeanne used sometimes to think of the broad smiling face in which the sad eyes were such a contrast to the laughing lips. She used to remember it when she was particularly sad, in the wayside huts, or in the vestibules where half-dressed people, who had been roused in the middle of the night, stood to wait for the coming of troops. And such memories only made her sadder; for Andrew had disappeared like all the others who had sent her roses. This Revolution had swallowed him too!

They clasped each other's hands. They smiled. They could find no words. The significance of the silence fright-

ened Jeanne. Her lips still smiled, but her eyes were dim, her heart was throbbing, she felt faint. Then, as though to save herself, she spoke.

"You here? Have you been here long? You're an officer?"

"No, Jeanne, I am not an officer."

Perhaps he shouldn't have said that. Andrew could be very cautious. But there is so much that is inexplicable in human conduct. When he looked at Jeanne, Andrew became a boy again. He was ready to tell her everything. His one thought was, "I have met her."

"I don't understand you, Andrew. But I don't understand anything in Russia now. You're not an officer? Then why are you in uniform?"

"I am here to organize a rising. As soon as they take Perekop we shall march. Do you still not understand? You see I am a . . ." and Andrew calmly and precisely pronounced that word which Jeanne regarded as so infamous.

Once in Rostoff, when Papa had heard that the body of a four-year-old girl had been found in a cellar with its head battered in, he had said: "That was undoubtedly the work of a Bolshevik," and Jeanne had believed him. All Papa's friends thought of them in the same way: "Brigands, murderers." And here was Andrew calling himself one. Should she run away? Should she call for help or burst into tears?

Poor Jeanne! Poor little French girl out of the Golden Library for happy and obedient children, flung by fate into this land of fur caps and wretched huts. She looked at him beseechingly and full of bewilderment.

"Of course I am a Bolshevik. How could I help being on their side?"

Andrew smiled—a good honest smile. And there was joy in it because he was organizing a rising, because he had met this delightful girl, and perhaps because the sun was warm and here was spring in the midst of winter.

His smile saved Jeanne. It made her realize that this was Andrew. Could the wicked smile like that? Therefore it must be good to organize risings. Therefore he was right.

And Jeanne's answering smile, though belated, was full of trust and tenderness. Now he was nearer to her than he had ever been. She knew his secret.

She stood on the border line between a childish game which must be kept secret from interfering grown-ups and some dark, menacing fate that was about to be unrolled before her.

He told her at great length how he had fought against the Whites in Siberia; how he had helped the Greens procure arms, assuming the rôle of a liaison officer at Soudac in order to do so; the thrills and delights of all this underground activity between death and victory, when to-morrow might mean a gallows at a prison gate or a charge of Red cavalry successfully penetrating the enemy's trenches.

"Red, White, Green." Jeanne heard these words though, truth to tell, she did not understand them. Yet, without understanding, she was falling more and more under Andrew's spell with every word he uttered.

"To organize a rising." That must be something splendid, like a warm wind that would change the whole dreadful town in one night. Theodosia was lovely—white houses, colonnades, the sea—how strange that she had never realized it before. The Revolution—it did not mean merely food cards and domiciliary searches. Evidently there was much more to it than that. Andrew—why, Andrew was ready to die for it, and one does not die for a food card. It really must be something like what she had learned about at school, like Hugo. "Ready to die." But there was no need for him to die. He must live. Would she see him again?

It was getting dark. Below them little lights began to glimmer. Someone, torturing a concertina, filled the air with its

weary wail; several shots rang out—perhaps at this very instant someone was being shot. He might be shot too. Like a fakir's seed, Jeanne grew with every passing moment. Her child heart was filled for the first time with a woman's anxiety.

"I am glad, ever so glad that we have met, but I am wondering whether we shall meet again?"

And then came to pass the second event of this mad day, as unexpected and mysterious as the warmth of spring in midwinter. Without understanding what she said or what made her say it, Jeanne answered, "I don't think that without you I could——"

And then she was frightened. But he smiled, though his gray eyes looked sadder than ever.

There was again the sound of shooting. Involuntarily and unwillingly Andrew listened. To-night he had to make his way to Outouz. He left Jeanne's words unanswered.

The lights were nearer and more numerous now. They were on the outskirts of the town.

"I must not go any further," said Andrew.

And he took her hand and kissed its palm with that agonizing tenderness that is sometimes aroused by the presentiment of a long, perhaps an eternal separation.

Jeanne hurried along busy Italy Street toward her home. She knew that she must think all this over and try to realize what had happened to her, but she wanted to put off the moment.

Outside a busy café where speculators were dealing in lira or sterling and boys darted about among them selling cigarettes or Turkish delight, Jeanne suddenly stopped. No one had called her. She had stopped because at that instant the clear, precise thought had flashed into her mind: "This is love."

The cigarette boys went on chattering. A Greek, carefully

looking her over, said something to her. Jeanne did not hear. She stood there and smiled.

But her serenity did not last long. Other disturbing thoughts followed, as they always follow an important happening, as callers ring the doorbell incessantly after a birth or a death.

Love! Then he would become part of her life. He would enter the pink room which somewhere or other would replace the one swallowed up by Russia. He would come in and stay a long time—forever? Was this dear man, almost a stranger to her and a little awe-inspiring, who talked about people he called Greens and Reds, was he to come close to her as Papa was close, nay, even closer? Jeanne felt frightened. A word came into her mind, a word that to her was new and strange, though it was familiar enough to all the folk who were strolling along the Quay—"husband." Andrew might become her husband.

That was what Jeanne was thinking. It was what her dead mother used to say in their little home on the Loire, while she stroked the unruly curls that no ribbon could confine. "You'll grow up and then you will marry." And at school at those hateful sewing lessons, they were always saying, "If you don't learn to sew you will be a bad wife." And the dear little thin books in their yellow bindings told the same story: love, kisses, a bridegroom, happiness.

Into her quiet world Andrew had rushed as though he were breaking something, laughing, big, in riding boots (Papa only wore shoes), terrifying like Russia, so dear that one wanted to cry, and still such a boy. Andrew!

Yes, Jeanne wanted him to be her husband. But what about Papa? Kind old Papa with his *Journal des Débats*, what was to become of him? And Jeanne, who a moment before had been so giddy with happiness that everything about her—the villas and bathing huts and little Tartar street



boys—had all whirled round her in a blue mist, Jeanne now gasped with pain. What about Papa, and Loirette, the town where she was born, where you washed down hot chestnuts with the murky wine of the countryside, where they played tric-trac, and where, if the little books in yellow bindings told the truth, people loved each other quietly, simply, gayly: a kiss—and he is your husband, and there is peace. Andrew? . . . Though Jeanne was in no mood for laughter she smiled at the thought of Andrew playing tric-trac with Monsieur Chalot, the Loirette notary.

“Green, Red, White.” No, there would be no peace with him. But Jeanne did not want peace.

But Papa? She could not desert Papa.

Jeanne was already standing in front of the hideous nymphs whose stone torsos embellished the façade of the Villa Ibragia, which a rich Karaim had built for himself and where the Neys now lived.

She had already put her hand on the Medusa’s Head which served alike as a specimen of high art and a bell pull, when again she heard the rattle of rifle fire. “They’re shooting.” Jeanne remembered the poignancy of Andrew’s leave-taking. No, the only thing that mattered was that he should go on living. I told him the truth. I know for certain now that I could not live without him.

Papa? But she could no longer find any trace of Papa in her thoughts. She sought for him in vain.

Only don’t let them kill Andrew. Nothing else was of importance; indeed, there was nothing else. So that was what love meant. And with this overwhelming, unendurable thought Jeanne rang. The Medusa’s Head nodded. If it could have conveyed all Jeanne’s emotion its ring would not have sounded like a front-door bell but like a furious onslaught.

### III

#### *On Bugs and Inspiration*

IN THE World's Chamber of Horrors there can be no doubt that the ordinary bedroom of a second-rate Russian hotel would be one of the most striking exhibits. On entering it you are assailed by a smell compounded of unturned mattresses, scented powder, carbolic, and food fried in oil. It reeks of the past. Perhaps from that peg in the left-hand corner some thick-necked card sharper, after having laid out his marked pack for the last time, had hanged himself on hearing the approaching footsteps of the police. On that dreadful sofa, with its protruding springs and its shape distorted by the weight of human flesh, some slobbery old man had sat, thrusting caramels on a tearful girl, pinching the young body which he meant to cut up and throw into the lavatory during the night. It was quite possible. The room had seen many things. There is no better refuge for the man who has lost everything in life. To come here, to dismiss the sleepy waiter after he has placed on the table those green candlesticks holding candles so covered with guttered wax that they look like puddings; to lie down on the lumpy sofa, but not to sleep, no, to watch, to listen. The walls bear traces of the many, many greasy heads which have leaned against them, the tap of the washstand drips incessantly, and there are the green water bottle, and the glass into which artificial teeth, the pride of many a dentist, have so often been put to soak. Then there are the peculiarly maddening hotel flies, the tedium, futility, and then—oblivion. At such

moments death comes easily and simply, like a landlady who, as she passes the door, rubs from the slate the name of the last lodger.

During the civil war these hotel rooms grew still more horrible. People rushed to them rather than to the private houses which seemed stifling from long years of warm comfort; they came for an hour—White, Red, any color. They put typewriters with broken ribbons on their night tables, they scattered rifles along the ill-smelling corridors, and then they set to work. The cracked mirror that had reflected the card sharper's tongue and the poor little girl's tears now pictured the final glimpses of people who wept, who prayed on their knees for mercy or, grim and silent, faced the muzzle of a gun.

Sometimes comrades held high revel there, so that the whole street resounded with the clatter of bottles, with bawdy songs, with the little shrieks of work girls not yet accustomed to such unbridled license, with drunken hiccoughs and with random shots.

Men wounded or sick with typhus were flung on the sofa, and in the night the old women of the neighborhood crossed themselves at the sounds of their delirium. Some went away, but others came to take their place. The wounded, left here with the empty bottles, were killed off—killed off on the spot, in the dark, damp rooms.

In just such a room of the Hotel Crimea at Theodosia, an almost traditional room, on an almost historical sofa, resting on its broken springs, a somber, melancholy man was lying. In the next room a drinking bout was going on. Guardsmen were celebrating their regimental fête with the help of a barrel of wine requisitioned from a sleepy Tartar, who had crept back in the night from Outouz to Theodosia. At times they hurrahed in honor of their august chief; then, remembering that their chief had long since

passed to other realms, they would rise and stand silent for a minute as the English do. Then they returned to their carousing—one can't fight all the time—and having thrust the actress Orloff (alias Riva Bloch) into the now, alas, empty barrel, they proceeded to rub her naked thighs with government petrol, as though they were cleaning clothes.

The somber man, however, was not thinking of the dead chief, nor did he take any interest in Riva Bloch. Why had he not been invited to the fête? Although the wretched candle gave hardly any light, it was still evident that the man on the sofa was dressed in decent civilian clothes. He looked like any ordinary hotel guest, and before the Revolution might have been a tourist or a commercial traveler. But the hotel was now in the hands of some military staff (presumably of the Astrakhan army), so that the fellow must have held an official position, though what that position was no one knew, not even Aristrach, the Greek waiter, who was as good as a ferret at discovering things. There were various rumors about him. Some said he was a newspaper scribbler who had hovered round Rostoff. Others said that he had been attached to the intelligence department at Mariepoul, but had got himself into a scandalous scrape by stealing a sapphire ring from an engineer's finger during his interrogation. Unfortunately the engineer was not only a Frenchman, but brother-in-law to the military attaché. Whatever the stranger's position had been, he no longer held it. The observant Aristrach knew that this client idled away his time at Theodosia and had no means of subsistence—neither rings nor anything else. Once indeed, having lured a young Italian midshipman from the transport *Helen* on the pretext of showing him a collection of lewd postcards, he had won about a thousand liras from him at *chemin de fer*. But he had squandered the lot in four days, exhausting the stock of Seson's delicatessen shop, a shop famous not merely

for its Haut Sauterne in general, but for a very special brand of Haut-Haut Sauterne. And at least a couple of dozen young women had been introduced to whatever comfort his room at the Crimea could offer. For ten days after that he had smoked the stubs of cigarettes which Aristrach had been too lazy to sweep away, and had dined at a cheap theatrical coöperative eating room connected with a chemist's shop, where he had been introduced by one of the four-day favorites to whom he had given a whole roll of notes for an hour's visit.

The melancholy man had every reason to be melancholy at this moment. There were no stubs left—neither in the pail nor under the bed. Since yesterday no dinner had been forthcoming owing to the stinginess of the chemist. As for Aristrach, he was a hard man and had not the slightest inclination to supply vodka on credit. As he had lost everything in life, there was nothing for him to do but lie on the sofa—that identical sofa. The bugs were an added nuisance. So long as he had lived like a gentleman, that is to say, had drunk Sauterne and flirted with little ladies and played cards, these insects—not devoid of intelligence—had hidden away in secret places. But no sooner had he settled on the sofa than they appeared in droves and covered the unhappy anchorite's body with spots in a few minutes. He crushed them with the big, gold-monogrammed, amber holder, which, in the absence of cigarettes, he was sucking like a baby's comforter. The bugs smelt nasty. The man crushed them industriously, scratched the worst places on his sides, and then replaced the acrid mouthpiece between his lips.

How really disgusting it all is, he thought. How nice it would be to sprinkle one's self with eau de Cologne. This clearly shows that though he had taken certain medicines and had fallen prostrate on the hotel sofa, he had no intention of dying.



Suddenly he made a vigorous movement. He must come to some decision. Should it be the mouthpiece or the cigarette case? During the last three years the melancholy man had lost everything, his last possessions had been taken by the women at Moscow or Rostoff for vodka, or even, sometimes, for bread. But he had kept two things of which he was genuinely fond. He had supreme faith in the holder with its mysterious monogram, "R. N.," bought ten years ago in Moscow. It was his mascot, and he believed that it was only necessary for him to put it between his lips to insure the turning up of a nine. As for the cigarette case with its naked young woman playing a mandolin, the melancholy man regarded that as an inestimable boom in his dealings with ordinary, not enameled, women. But he had to choose. He jumped up from the broken springs and with decisive finality stuck the cigarette case in his pocket. A noble gesture. He evidently prized love above all things.

The holder was at once handed over to Aristrach, who rubbed his nose with a knowing air, and five minutes later there appeared on the night table a handful of loose cigarettes, a bottle of vodka, a portion of fish, cooked à la Grecque—that is, smothered in a thick, messy sauce—and, instead of bread, all of which had been eaten by the guardsmen—some cookies oozing with oil. The incongruity did not seem to trouble him. He drank greedily and ate indiscriminately, now of the fish and now of the cookies. His mood was evidently changing. The bugs had become a negligible detail. Indeed, they might have slunk back into their hiding places.

After his seventh or eighth glass of vodka, he took out the cigarette case, glanced at the mandolin and the rest, and said aloud, "Yes, woman, Paris, the real demimonde. I'm fed up. A glass of champagne to lovely woman!"

Impossible not to recognize in this stray visitor at the

Hotel Crimea of Theodosia that true denizen of Moscow, one of the former ornaments of that capital, one of the partners of the Cherkessoﬀ Lane firm—Nikifor Ignatievitch Halibieff.

How proud poor bereaved Nechensohn would have been if he could have seen his friend who, despite all his misfortunes—the base treachery of the engineer, the complete failure of his newspaper, the *Orthodox Tocsin*, the stupidity and close-fistedness of Aristrach—despite everything, assumed a more and more heroic attitude after each glass of the vodka which had been obtained at the cost of such sacrifice.

Halibieff hiccupped—a sign that someone was thinking of him—it must have been Nechensohn.

But memories of the past were not occupying Halibieff at the moment. Money—and then Paris—women, life. Or else? Or else what? Bugs? No, money, money at any cost.

Halibieff gulped down three more glasses. Then, a vague smile, the outcome of inspiration, spread over his good-looking face, a face so undoubtedly that of an aristocrat, even if his passport did not proclaim the fact.

“Aristrach! Ink! Paper!”

On a sheet of gray paper, spotted with grease from his fish sauce, in muddy ink which had just been watered, Halibieff wrote and wrote. He stopped to reflect. Then, his ears alert for any sound, he went on writing again. The guardsmen had been silent for some time. There was nothing to be heard but the dripping of the tap and a sonorous snore from an adjacent room. Halibieff listened to the silence, as a dreamy poet strains to catch an elusive rhythm. Then he wrote again. He was possessed by creative fervor. His nervous hands (we have already noticed their nervousness) covered the pages with short, abrupt lines. Perhaps he was writing an ode to the enameled lady on his cigarette case?

No. Far from being a dedication to that beauty, the top line of his page ran "Disposition of the Reserve Forces on the Polish Front."

When he had finished it was nearly dawn and the peg and the sofa, which we have already observed, were coming back to life. In the cracked mirror Halibieff saw the reflection of his face, tired out but lighted with inspiration. He took out a visiting card and read with evident satisfaction the inscription:

"Nikifor Halibieff, editor of the *Orthodox Tocsin*."

"Got it!" as Pollux, left behind in far-away Moscow, would have said. "To-morrow morning I must have a shave."

Although it was now daylight, Halibieff decided to undress and get a few hours' sleep. He ate the last of the cookies, relaxed, and closed his eyes: he would have a woman, a little doughnut of a woman. And suddenly he became aware of a bug on his pillow. But he did not squash it. He spared it, not because the holder that had been so useful in exterminating these vermin was in the hands of Aristrach. No, he spared it because he felt moved, uplifted. Damn it all, let the thing live.

## IV

### *M. Alfred Ney's Busy Morning*

M. ALFRED NEY was reading the paper. But he was reading without any enjoyment. It was not his dear *Journal des Débats* but the *Crimean Courier*, which recorded in smooth phrases the Red victories at the front. I told them so. We're throwing our money away. They won't believe me. They sit in Paris and think that this is an ordinary war. It isn't a war, it's the devil knows what. It's a fight between mad dogs, and we can't do anything here until they've worried each other to death. So grumbled M. Ney. His grumbling was interrupted by the entrance of Jeanne, who came up to her father and kissed his bald head.

"Good-morning, little one. Things are going from bad to worse. I expect we shall be able to start for Paris in three or four weeks. Aren't you glad?"

But there was no joy in Jeanne's expression. On the contrary, in her dark eyes with their shadowy rings caused by a sleepless night was a new, sad, lost look.

M. Ney was somewhat startled by it.

"What's the matter, child? Aren't you well? You look ill. Hadn't I better send for the doctor?"

"I'm quite well."

"Then what is it?"

"I was just going to tell you, Papa, only it's awfully difficult. Wait a moment. I'll tell you in a minute. Something dreadful has happened to me. I expect it will be my ruin."

Jeanne burst into tears. M. Ney was seriously alarmed.

All sorts of things might have happened to the girl in this land of savages. Jeanne had been out alone the day before, she had returned late, had gone straight to her room and had not come down for the evening tea. What did it mean?

"You must understand me, Papa. I don't know myself how it happened. I believe I'm in love."

"What do you mean by 'in love'? You don't know what you are talking about. Tell me, have you done anything foolish?"

"I haven't done anything. But I tell you I'm in love. It's dreadful. I could do anything now."

"That's not what I'm talking about. Can't you understand? Well, for example, did he kiss you?"

"Yes, once, my hand."

M. Ney immediately regained his composure. Indeed, he became gay. It is not easy for a lone widower to bring up a daughter, especially in a barbarous country like this. If there was nothing more in it than that . . . The happy parent even began to whistle an air from *Carmen*. But Jeanne went on crying. Glancing at his daughter, M. Ney recalled her words and lost his temper again.

"Please be good enough to give up flirting with these savages. You can flirt when you get to Paris. Who is this swash-buckler?"

"He—he was a student and now—now he is—," but Jeanne could not get the word out. M. Ney questioned her for an hour, in vain. He could get nothing out of her.

"Perhaps he's a beggar? In this country even decent people become beggars. Why don't you answer me? Do you want to kill me with your obstinacy? Well, what is he? A thief?"

"No, no, Papa. You must not be angry with me. But he is—he is a Bolshevik. No, don't say he is a murderer, he's a different sort of Bolshevik—he's good."

This was simply beyond M. Ney's endurance. The color



of his bald head was even more eloquent than his groans, and his rapid breathing suggested that he might drop down dead. Ungrateful daughter! He rose, he was suffocating, he unbuttoned his waistcoat. He was like the hero of an antique tragedy. He was on the verge of cursing her and then remembered that she was only a silly child. Well, what did it matter if he had kissed her once? He would give her a good scolding, and that would be the end of it.

M. Ney did not merely shout, he bellowed until his voice shook all the Chinese ornaments collected by the Karaim who had fled to Constantinople.

"He means to dishonor you, like a simple housemaid, don't you understand?"

"That is not true. He loves me, too. He may become my husband."

This was too much. At this point M. Ney gave an unnatural, theatrical laugh. His bald head went purple. His life was in danger.

"Your husband? Really? But can a Bolshevik be a husband? They are not husbands. They are—they are camels, they are worse than camels, they are apaches. I'll shut you up. Only let him put his nose inside my doors. I'll arrest him. I'll hang him."

But what further the indignant father intended to do with the insolent fellow was never disclosed. Vanya, the manservant, had been knocking at the study door for a long time, but M. Ney's shouts had drowned all other sounds. The uproar had been so loud that it had penetrated to the waiting room, where a certain visitor was crouching in fear. Vanya, tired of knocking, opened the door and poked his sarcastic nose into the room. That nose proved to be their salvation. It interrupted the scene of tragedy and probably saved M. Ney from a stroke.

Vanya respectfully handed a card to his master on which

the following words were penciled: "On very urgent and secret business."

Jeanne ran into the visitor as she left the room. It was Halibieff, fairly well groomed and freshly shaved. The encounter made an equally serious, but totally different, impression on each of them. Jeanne thought: What a repulsive creature! And the mole on his cheek! Ugh! Such an opinion was of course somewhat personal to herself, for in spite of the mole Halibieff had no small measure of success with the ladies. On the other hand, Halibieff was delighted with Jeanne. Appetizing morsel! Even her tears and disordered hair only enhanced her charm. Halibieff felt that emotion made young women more tempting. Unfortunately for him, the encounter lasted for only a second. Jeanne hurriedly ran off to her room.

Half an hour later, while bidding M. Ney good-bye, Halibieff said casually: "I caught sight of a charming young lady. Was it your daughter?"

"Yes, it was my daughter."

"Perhaps on some other occasion you will present me to her."

M. Ney gave an irritated little cough. "In our purely formal relations, sir, I think that would be quite superfluous."

Halibieff was already walking down the Quay before M. Ney stopped spluttering with indignation. There are no honest people here. We had Carnot. Here there are only apaches, not a single patriot. I'm ready to pay that sort of creature, pay him well, if need be, but present him to Jeanne? No, it was urgently necessary that they should be off to Paris at the earliest possible moment.

Halibieff, striding along the Quay, was furious: giving himself airs. The girl was certainly charming. A girl like that cost a lot. You'd have to pay in gold francs. And that

father of hers would not give more than a few bills. Such meanness. After all, the Bolsheviks were good fellows. They did skin this French canaille. Frogs. We'll show them what Russia is like before we've done with them. Better still, though, to get to Paris. I'll get money, and the devil take the hindmost. Perhaps "Papa" will sing in another key then. Yes, the girl was certainly charming. But, first of all—money.

## V

### *What Old Achma Shuly Sang About*

IT WAS easy enough to find Achma Shuly's coffee house because of its sign, Rein the Horse, which might be either its name or merely a motto. The coffee house was very crowded. Achma himself, a doleful Tartar, was busied in carrying to and from the stove the tall, thin-necked copper coffee pots with their tiny lids in which he heated the coffee over the glowing coals. A Russian servant girl yawned pitifully as she poured out tea. There were also stale rolls to be had, and greasy pies which were said by Achma's rivals to contain dog flesh.

When Osman Seydul, the rich Tartar owner of the best Outouz orchards, entered, Achma ignored his other customers and began with ritualistic movements to prepare from specially ground beans and goats' milk a special brew which was called *café à la Sultan*. The other guests might inhale its invigorating aroma gratis, and they did. But it did not exhilarate them. Their voices—not their words, for the customers of the Rein the Horse spoke in at least five languages—their tones expressed their unqualified depression. The times were hard!

A Tartar from the neighboring village of Kozi emitted particularly doleful sounds. It was from this same Tartar that the merry guardsmen at the Hotel Crimea had yesterday requisitioned their barrel of wine. The Bulgarians from their settlement at Koktebel'sk had every cause for discontent, because they were being forced to cart wood for the troops for nothing.

A Greek from Armatlouka was bitterly complaining of the Ingos who were always boasting about the Greens they had caught, whereas in reality they did nothing but frighten the Greek women and eat all the Greek fowls. The Outouz Germans were pedantically finding fault with the general disorder: rifles were not made for shooting cows in broad daylight. The soldiers of Frederick the Great never behaved like that. As for the Russians from Sultanovka—they were not formulating their grievances. Perspiring from their tea, they were either sighing lugubriously or quarreling with gusto. They quite understood the grievances of all these foreign-speaking people, but over and above what they had to suffer, the Russians themselves had troubles that could not be expressed in words, a dull pain that hurt though you could not say exactly where it was. Even the rich Tartar, sipping his *café à la Sultan*, got no real pleasure from either its aroma or its sweetness. What did coffee matter? What did all his Outouz peach trees matter, when his only son, who had gone into the hills to join the Greens, had been killed by cruel bandits? Accursed times!

Only two people, who looked like bazaar merchants, sitting quietly in their corner drinking coffee, took no part in any of these lamentations. Obviously they were not interested in politics. They frequently glanced toward the door and were evidently expecting somebody. Perhaps one of those speculators who bought up the laced boots and camel's-hair pullovers sent to Theodosia by M. Ney's naïf government? After one glance at them, old Achma Shuly thought to himself, "Those two are making money."

Achma Shuly was mistaken, but his mistake was natural. Had not Jeanne yesterday taken Andrew for a real officer? If she had been in the coffee house now, she might well have thought that he traded in stolen arms at the nearest bazaar. This was to Andrew's credit. He was a good conspirator.



No one would have recognized him as the bold young lieutenant who had galloped over from Outouz this morning. The other man at his table was Nikita, a sailor who had deserted from the Black Sea fleet, a brave man and a kind one.

Once when Andrew was hiding, he had spent a week with him in the hills near Aloushta, and there they had become friends. They were waiting. For whom were they waiting? Someone who was coming on very important business, because Andrew, who ought to have been at Kertch, had stayed at Theodosia to see him.

In a little while a young man came in, carefully looked round at all the tables, then made straight for the corner where the two men were waiting for him. It was Vanya, the Neys' servant, who had saved his master from apoplexy that morning. A strange coincidence that Andrew should be meeting someone from the Villa Ibragia, where, wounded by her father's treatment and worn out by her love, poor Jeanne was weeping.

But Vanya did not hand Andrew a touching little crumpled note, nor did Andrew expect one. They had other business in hand. The waitress brought a glass of tea, and gave a terrific yawn. The men started a whispered conversation—yes, they must be selling pullovers.

Vanya said softly: "Important documents. I heard everything—some scoundrel was offering them for sale."

Andrew frowned: "They must be got back."

"Yes, and it must be to-night. Remember, the diplomatic post goes to-morrow."

Nikita only asked: "Then you will open the door to us?"

Vanya was in a hurry. He had been sent out only for a moment to buy a lemon at Seson's shop. Exhausted by his conversation with his undutiful daughter, M. Ney had decided to fortify himself with a stiff glass of toddy.

When Vanya had gone Andrew said hesitatingly: "Look

here, Nikita, let's try to keep it dry there. We aren't going to kill anyone."

Nikita was surprised. He even rubbed his chin. "Why, are they your relatives?"

"No, not at all. I have a wife in Moscow and nobody else in all the world. Free."

"Well, if not relations, then friends? Vanya says this Frenchman has a nice daughter; perhaps you're in love with her?"

"I've never so much as seen her. I merely say that it isn't worth while. We'll take the documents, and that's all there is to it."

Nikita seemed to smile. He was no longer young. He had spent years at sea, had seen a good deal of life, and knew men. But perhaps Andrew only imagined the smile, and there really was no smile. Indeed, was there not rather a frown on the weatherbeaten face? Anyhow, at parting the sailor said, "All right, two o'clock at the pump. We won't touch anyone. We'll just take the papers." Then, as they neared the door, he added, "Perhaps you'd rather not go? You ought to be at Kertch, oughtn't you? Say the word, and I'll manage without you."

"What an idea! We'll make it two o'clock."

Andrew stayed on alone. He asked for another cup of coffee. What had come over him? The struggle? The joy of having done his duty? The fear of losing his beloved? No, Andrew was too young, too care free to think about all that. He had done his best. He had saved the life of his enemy, saved it because his enemy happened to be Jeanne's father. That was all. It was impossible that he should lose Jeanne. She had turned up for him just as a lucky card turns up. She had fallen to his lot, just as the sunshine, health, and the Revolution had. Other people had to pass their lives without revolutions. There are countries where there is no sunshine

but only fog. Some people are lame or blind. There are lives devoid of love. But Andrew? Andrew was born to be happy.

He sat in his obscure corner for a long time. The wretched, unhappy customers had all gone, driving off to the neighboring villages in their springless carts which with every turn of the wheels seemed to be creaking out the words, "What times! What accursed times!"

Old Achma Shuly, warming his withered fingers at the stove, began to sing. His customers had gone, and there were no more orders for coffee. The servant girl had stopped yawning. Lulled by the song, she had fallen asleep in her chair. Achma Shuly went on singing. The wise old Tartar knew that there were neither accursed nor blessed times, that at all times men either wept or laughed. He knew that the young fellow sitting there alone in his corner and gazing so defiantly, so bravely at the dark window was dreaming of some lovely woman, of glory, of happiness. Achma knew that he might lose heart and even weep, but he knew also that after an hour, or perhaps a year, he would be happy once again. And he knew that nothing could now bring happiness to old Osman Seydoul who had so many peaches in his Outouz orchards but no longer had his only son. He knew, too, that a time would soon come when no coals could bring warmth to his cold fingers. And because he knew all this his song grew even sadder. It was so sad that Andrew could not help sighing. And that sigh—just a sigh, no word was uttered—seemed like the sound of a dear foreign name.

But when he went out into the square, full of salt wind and the voices of the passers-by, and with the stars overhead that seemed to be blown about by the wind, Andrew no longer thought of the girl to whom he was so soon to go, an uninvited, a terrifying guest. He strode briskly along, smiling as he listened to his own footsteps.

## VI

### *The Northeast Wind*

A CRUEL northeast wind which rose in the night made winter master of Theodosia in a quarter of an hour. If any petty speculator, moved by his desire to buy the coveted sterling from English sailors who had arrived in the evening, had resolved to poke his nose out of doors, that keen, speculative nose would have become purple in a moment. Shutters flapped pitifully in the darkness. The rising northeaster, the cause of Theodosia's latest discomfort, howled far more fiercely than yard dogs chained to their posts. The gale was not satisfied with the sea, where boats rushed about as aimlessly as hens in a yard; nor with the dangerous lanes, in one of which some of the customers of the Rein the Horse sat shivering all night by reason of a broken wheel. It was not satisfied with the streets of Theodosia, the speculators' noses, the flapping shutters, or the howling dogs. No, it rushed insolently into the houses, the shabby houses of the wretched town, so badly in need of repair.

Those who had logs lighted their stoves. Those who had only sticks gathered from the woods lighted their smoky little braziers. Those who had neither huddled together in the faint hope that their poor human warmth might to some extent soften the icy breath from Russia's frozen steppes.

M. Alfred Ney was paid in francs, so he of course had any amount of logs, and Vanya had stoked the stoves for the night. But it was very cold all the same, either because the Karaim Saroum had jerrybuilt his villa, or because the wind

was too strong. The stove gave no real warmth. The curtain billowed in the gale, and a cold blast struck M. Ney full in the face. All moist with the stove and his toddy, M. Ney was nervous. The awful howling of the wind exasperated him. He felt ready to howl himself—like the old dog in the villa yard. He could not make up his mind to undress and put out the light. What was the use? The wind would not let him sleep. It would be better to write letters to France—the post left to-morrow.

But instead of taking a sheet of paper he picked up an envelope and addressed it. Having written the word "Paris," he dropped his pen. His nerves were really playing the deuce with him. His feelings were getting the better of him in a manner altogether unbefitting a member of an official mission.

Jeanne was as much to blame for this as was the northeaster. After supper, at which neither of them had spoken, there had been a reconciliation. By tacit agreement neither of them mentioned the morning conversation. M. Ney talked to Jeanne of his late wife, of Loirette. How happily they had lived there. When she returned from early mass, Mme Ney always brought back flowers—a bunch of wisteria or asters. Then they had coffee on the veranda. That is, he drank coffee, but owing to her weak heart the doctor had forbidden her to indulge in her favorite beverage. She would ask him anxiously, "Is it strong enough, my dear?" They would sit there and watch the town girls walking on the banks of the Loire, their arms round each other's waists, so slim and trim in their big, awkward sabots. Sometimes Mme Ney would complain of her heart. At such moments she would press to her bosom her mischievous little daughter's head, and say, "*Dodo, ma petite Jeannette.*" And at these reminiscences not only did tears fill the eyes of his daughter—no longer the little Jeannette but the grown-up serious Jeanne—who laid



her head on his shoulder and wept, but his own eyes, so shortsighted without glasses, so bewildered for the eyes of a member of a foreign mission, were dimmed by a mist as glass is dimmed by a human breath.

After this conversation, M. Ney had gone to his study, touched and softened. Then the northeaster finally got hold of him. How could he write official letters? Paris—would he ever get there? He was feeling his age. The old pains in his liver were worrying him. Was death to overtake him in this accursed country? Paris—why, even Père Lachaise with its alleys of plane seemed like the Promised Land. He was on the verge of tears. And the northeaster continued its dark work.

At last M. Ney pulled himself together. He took a sheet of paper from his letter case, a sheet which he had received from the editor of the *Orthodox Tocsin*. He carefully reread it.

Though he had nothing but contempt for Halibieff, M. Ney not only felt no compunction for his own conduct, but considered it entirely laudable. When all was said and done, the man was a Russian. For twenty-five francs he had sold his country. There were no patriots among Russians. Even the Whites were a lot of apaches. He had written that to Paris. He, Alfred Ney, was here to look after the interests of France. Espionage was a commendable, a noble calling when exercised on behalf of justice and morality.

Look at his younger brother, Raymond Ney. How much everyone in Paris respected him. He had organized the most famous private detective agency in the world. He was standing sentry over the interests of the family and private property. M. Alfred Ney was doing even finer work. Here, in this savage country, he was safeguarding the interests of his beautiful France, like a soldier of the Grande Armée.

Once more M. Ney forgot about morals and high politics. Mentally taking a deep breath, he smelt the scent of wisteria just as he used to smell it long ago through the open windows

of his house on the Loire. His wife, Yvonne—how much Jeanne was like her! He must tell her——

But there was no time to finish his thought. Feeling a sudden blast of the northeaster, he turned toward the door and was amazed to see two revolvers pointed at him.

"Be kind enough to give us the military documents you obtained to-day."

"Directly."

Andrew gave a sigh of relief: everything had gone smoothly.

M. Ney opened the right-hand drawer of his writing table. His thoughts were disjointed: Carnot, Patriot, France, the Russians, cowardice—no, not for anything in the world.

There was a sound of light footsteps. Nikita turned, and at the same instant a shot rang out. M. Ney, quickly snatching a revolver from the drawer, had killed Nikita on the spot. Andrew's fingers, not his brain—for could his brain function?—no, his fingers automatically responded. With a low cry, M. Ney sank to the ground. It was all over in a second. When Andrew returned to his senses he saw two dead bodies on the floor, and in the doorway, Jeanne. She wore a long nightgown, which seemed to swallow up her slender body. Her eyes were as fixed as the painted hands of a toy watch. It seemed as though she did not even breathe. It was as though the room were empty of human beings. The accursed northeaster sounded as though it were weeping and repenting for them all.

When he saw Jeanne's eyes Andrew, hitherto so care free, bowed his shoulders, his heart sank, all his strength left him. He was ready to fall on the carpet, a third corpse. He could not live. He made no effort to speak or to move. He was gazing at Jeanne, but he could not see her. It was as though he too were dead and just happened to be propped up.

Jeanne spoke. It was not the voice of a girl in a childish

nightgown, who an hour ago had wept at the thought of her mother's lullaby. It was the voice of a woman, a grown woman whom misery had made wise, and whose love had made her stronger than a man of much learning.

"Run, run quickly."

In obedience to her words, not daring to look at her eyes which he feared more than death, Andrew moved, dazed, like a mechanical toy soldier. He went out on to the Quay, where the wild northeaster awaited him.

## VII

### *The Two Jeanne*

JEANNE's state of mind resembled more than anything that of a patient lying in solitude for weeks on end with his face to the wall. He breathes, sleeps, and eats in his own accustomed room, but his whole world has changed. He finds himself in a world of hideous nightmare: the pattern of the wall paper has resolved itself into faces, recognizable but so distorted as to be intolerable, and not to be escaped by a mere shutting of inflamed eyes. Then, his temperature chart; the time, no longer divided into hours, or even into day and night; the deafening silence reverberating with strident thoughts that make him dizzy, thoughts so multitudinous that his head feels like a vast theater packed from pit to gallery.

Jeanne was experiencing something of this kind. It is true, of course, that she was not in bed and had no one to take her temperature. No, she was up, signing papers for the undertaker, tidying her room every morning, drinking coffee, and listening to the condolences or the indignation of the members of other missions. But who can picture her isolation, the apathy with which she reacted to her daily routine, to the sight of the respectful delegations, to the sun, the wind and the sea, which her windows showed to be pursuing their normal course.

She seemed to be living only half her life in those surroundings. The other half had its own order and its own heavy burdens. Sometimes this illusory life seemed so real

that the girl Jeanne Ney who received callers and signed papers would raise her hand to her brow with the conviction that she was going mad. Yet the thought did not alarm her.

She seemed to be living a dual life, as if there were two sisters, though Jeanne had never had a sister. Sometimes, as she passed along the corridor, the elder sister would glance at the dim mirror that reflected eyes as expressionless as the glass eyes in an optician's showcase. Or she felt that she was simultaneously a tiny girl, who still had a bib tied on at meals, and another being, not grown up, but so old as to be terrifying, older than grandmother at Loirette, so old that she would die if a door slammed.

Both these Jeanne's were alive. One of them lived with Papa—not the Papa who was buried in the damp clay, but the living Papa who was in the house, near her. "Good-morning." Jeanne would unfold the *Journal des Débats*, which came as before. He would take the paper. He would be on the verge of smiling. "Paris—we shall soon be in Paris."

And the other Jeanne? With whom was she living? She did not dare think of it, the first Jeanne would not have tolerated it.

Who had written in the yellow booklets that love was happiness? Who had invented that mad spring day when Jeanne had walked along Italy Street brimming over with childish nonsense about happiness and husbands? No, not when but *how* could it ever have happened?

Jeanne knew now what love meant. It was like the plague in the old legends, like the fevered delirium of the typhus patients writhing on the platforms at Rostoff. It was like death. And someone, whose name she dared not breathe, was forcing his way into the house. He was horribly dressed, a red coat with blue braid, like the wall paper in the sitting room.



He hacked at everything with an ax. (Jeanne was not sure what an ax looked like, and she imagined it as an enormous pin.) Papa was lying in the cellar. He was like the little girl who had been found at Rostoff.

Papa, dear old Papa. She used to bring him hot-water bottles when he got that pain in his liver. He would walk about in the morning in a ridiculous lilac dressing gown reading the paper, answering at random and making fun of himself: "I'm getting old; I don't hear as well as I used to." And the bit of wadding in his ear. His dear ear. But there was no ear. There was no head. "*He*" had smashed it with the ax. He would come back. But she must never see him, never. At the very sight of him she would die. But supposing he did come? Then—then—why, of course, she must let him in.

Then the second Jeanne, the older sister, the old woman who was like grandmother at Loirette, would push this Jeanne aside with impatient hands.

Pity, a woman's all-penetrating pity, filled her. She saw it all: now he stood in the study, helpless, lifeless. Poor boy! She pitied him as though it were he that had been killed. It would have been better if they had killed her too. Or why had she not perished at the hands of the man in the round cap when she met him that day outside Quarantine? Why had "he" come? She had spent barely an hour with him, and now it seemed as though all her life, even at Loirette——

Jeanne, how dare you think of it? What about Papa? But it was not "he." He never wanted to. It was just an accident. Only an hour! Somewhere she had read that the average duration of a human life was thirty-eight years. What a long time! An hour was only sixty minutes; you counted up to three thousand, and then, ten, eleven, twelve—then it was over.

But you can't even breathe without "him." Jeanne was, indeed, struggling for breath. She gasped, clutching at the air

which would not fill her lungs. She was like a fish with an open, tortured mouth. But when she reached that state she hastily drank a glass of water in order to become again that Jeanne Ney who received callers and signed documents.

So the weeks passed by. Things happened, but they all left Jeanne untouched. Once more, members of the delegations began to call on her, sighed in sympathy, and urged her to go to Paris with them. Jeanne never argued; she agreed to everything, but each time a boat was due to sail she fell ill.

She was not pretending, yet it was not true. Jeanne had enough strength to undertake any journey, and it was not illness that deterred her. But she felt unable to leave Theodosia. One Jeanne said: The damp clay, the study, that very chair, that very carpet with its dark stain, like a mole on a man's cheek—could she leave all that? The other Jeanne answered nothing. She was afraid to understand, afraid to think that the only reason for her not wanting to leave this awful town was that, somewhere near, he was wandering in the hills, in the suburbs, now at Outouz, now at Nasipkoe, daily changing not only his dress, but his face, his soul—sometimes a gentle child, sometimes a terrible murderer with an ax, like the northeast wind roaring everywhere, and everywhere bringing not joy but gloomy shadows.

## VIII

### *The Ears and the Heart of Comrade Zabarkevitch*

UNDER the wide windows of the Villa Ibragia shooting became more and more frequent. Members of the foreign missions had long since ceased calling on Jeanne. By this time they must be far away in beautiful Paris. A fierce struggle was in progress not only in Jeanne's heart, but all over the wretched dark and hungry town. There came an evening when all the lights in the villa went out. It was very quiet. There wasn't even any shooting. As on that never-to-be-forgotten night, the northeast wind was raging. Jeanne wandered aimlessly through the solitude of the great villa which the Karaim Saroum had built for entertainment and amusement. She was utterly alone: Vanya had left long ago, and the housemaid Masha, frightened at the shooting, had run away the day before to hide in her sister's cellar.

Jeanne listened to the wind. There was plenty of it, plenty of air, yet she was stifling. In the deep silence of the night she suddenly heard a clear, loud rapping. It was a terrifying sound in that darkness. Her heart answered with a thud—"he!" Then it was death. Well, perhaps it was easier in the damp clay. Resigned to her fate, Jeanne went into the hall and opened the door. She was immediately enveloped by the northeaster. She could see nothing. The door closed. Once more all was dark and still. Then there was the timid spurt of a lighted match, and there stood a man, a strange man, a tiny thin Jew with enormous ears, which seemed to lead

a life of their own, and looked like the wings of a butterfly spread for flight. Why was he here? Had he come to kill her, to torture her?

The man went up the stairs in silence and sat down in an armchair in the waiting room, raising the collar of his thin coat because it was freezing, the house not having been heated for days. At last he said timidly: "I am Zaharkevitch. I am going to stay here."

Jeanne did not ask who he was or why he had come. Since it was not "he," what did it matter? Perhaps he meant to kill her, or perhaps he only meant to rummage all over the house as so many men in military caps had already done. She wandered about the empty rooms till dawn. As for the man who called himself Zaharkevitch, he lay down on the floor with a large album under his head and immediately went to sleep.

In the morning he questioned Jeanne in the most businesslike way. "Where do you keep the chips, Comrade?"

"Chips? What do you mean? Do you want money? Take it."

Zaharkevitch shrugged his shoulders. He found a pinch of tea somewhere, boiled a kettle, and brought Jeanne a cup.

"Drink this, Comrade."

Jeanne was puzzled. For weeks she had lived in a world that was filled with the struggle between Papa and Andrew. Now, for the first time, something outside that world had caught her attention. Having failed to notice the many battles, the withdrawal of the Whites, the entry of the Reds, she suddenly found herself face to face with something incomprehensible. Who was this man? Why was he here? He had come in the night while the northeast wind was blowing, he had not killed her, he had not ransacked her cupboards, he had taken no money, he had

slept on the floor, and now he had brought her tea. What did it mean?

Zaharkevitch saw her bewilderment and made up his mind to speak, though he loved silence above all things—above Karl Marx, above his little daughter Bella: "You need not be frightened, Comrade. I'm not going to hurt you. But everything is changing so just now. Our regular forces have not occupied the town yet. This house has a bad name. Saroum was known as a regular bloodsucker. And then there was the French mission. There may be all sorts of excesses. So I shall stay here to see that no one hurts you."

His words did not restore Jeanne's equanimity. She gazed in bewilderment at this unwished for protector. A stranger, an utter stranger with protruding ears, who called her comrade, had come suddenly in the night to protect and save her. It was impossible. Such things happened only in pretty little yellow books, and Jeanne knew by now that books lied.

"Why do you want to save me? You don't know me. Who can have told you about me?"

"I heard by chance. Please don't be upset, Comrade. I shall only stay here three days. I shall sleep in that room. You go on living as though I were not here."

Jeanne asked no more questions. She even tried to smile, but she achieved only a grimace. However, she obediently drank the tea. All day she tried to fathom the secret of this strange, heaven-sent tenderness, but she could not. Suddenly, in the night, an idea struck her. This was a Bolshevik, so "he" had sent him. The thought filled her with joy and fear. She rushed to the waiting room, where her strange guest was asleep, and shook him: "Listen. Did Andrew send you?"

"What Andrew? I don't know any Andrew."



This was reassuring, but it removed an anxiety that had been also a delight. Once again she was ready to meet death calmly.

"His name is Andrew. He is a Bolshevik, too."

"Well, Comrade, there are plenty of Bolsheviks. All Russia is Bolshevik, and half Europe, too. As for me, no one sent me. I came of my own accord. You go and sleep in peace."

So Jeanne went back to her own world to be torn and stifled again. But something in that world had changed and, strange to say, the change was due to the little man with the funny ears who slept in the waiting room. He had quietly and shyly entered her world and had made his presence felt by a host of almost imperceptible details: the way he smiled, handing Jeanne a cup of tea; the way he scratched, rather than knocked, at her door every morning to ask if she had had a good night; his patched coat; his kind, short-sighted eyes, like those of a bitch in whelp which, when he spoke of his little Bella, glowed like the shop lamps in a snowy little side street; even his ears, his awful ears, all combined, little by little, to soften Jeanne. Something natural, something human, had come into her life. She began to answer kindness with kindness. She was no longer frightened. She was touched by that ridiculous locution: "Comrade Jeanne."

The three days had long since passed. Three weeks went by, Zaharkevitch going off early every day to work on some revolutionary committee. He came back late, often after midnight. Jeanne waited up for him. Having learned what was meant by "chips," she would chop up sticks and make his tea. Jeanne's convalescence may be dated from the day on which, having noticed how cold he was with the skirt of his coat pinned round him, she took a needle and thread and mended it for him.

No, she had forgotten nothing. But old Achma Shuly, sadly singing over the embers of his stove, had known the truth: youth had done what only youth can do—it had restored to Jeanne the capacity to smile, just as returning health restores it to the convalescent, even though she smiled but seldom, and then only with a sense of guilt. Day by day she was more surely returning to life.

She even began to think of the future. She was alive, therefore she must go on living, therefore she must go to Paris. She had relatives there, an uncle, cousins, they would help, everything would be simpler, easier. Here there was no one but dear bat-eared nurse Zaharkevitch. If he left her—that would be the end of her. And Andrew? But Andrew was not a man: he was only a pain. Jeanne would not cease to love him—she could not do that. Another spring day with another man—that was out of the question forever. But there was no need to think of Andrew, it was enough to know that he existed. She must think of life. She must be grown up. Papa was dead—she was alone in the world. And one day she said to Zaharkevitch: “I want to go to Paris, to my own people. I think I have enough money for the journey, but how am I to get there?”

Zaharkevitch smiled sadly. He was used to Jeanne. He cherished her as a nurse cherishes a weak, sickly child. And his heart was so constituted that it had to spend itself in tenderness. In some degree, Jeanne had served as a substitute for Bella. If she went away he would have to find some other object for his devotion. He would, for example, have to see that the secretary of the Revolutionary committee had regular meals everyday. And the secretary of the Revolutionary committee would not understand it. Jeanne was going—but Zaharkevitch said nothing to her about his grief. How could anyone be interested in his feelings? One must learn to keep silence.

"Well, that can be managed. I'll get you a passport. I believe an Italian boat is expected to put in here soon. That would take you to Constantinople, and from there you could get another to Marseilles."

So everything was arranged. Her passport was actually lying on the table.

Owing to the length of a meeting at which they had been discussing how to sow a larger area of agricultural land, Zaharkevitch one night came home very late. He scratched at her door and said that a boat was sailing the day after to-morrow. Then, as usual, he said, "Sleep well." But he did not go away. He actually sat down on the edge of a stool, a thing he had never done before. Jeanne looked at him affectionately. During the last few days he had become specially dear to her, even his ears. There was nothing funny about them. His ears were like that, that was all. Different people had different ears, and so long as he was nice, his ears were nice, too. If only he could get away to Moscow, to his wife, to Bella. As it was, the poor dear would be left alone without anyone even to sew on a button. Zaharkevitch sat there, the very picture of grief. In order to comfort him Jeanne said, "You'll see Bella soon."

But Zaharkevitch did not smile this time; his eyes did not glow like the lamps in a shop window.

"Comrade Jeanne, I have something else to tell you, not about me. I don't know how to say it, and it ought to be said nicely. You are going. Perhaps you will never return——"

"You are sorry to lose me?"

"What do I matter? I am of no interest to anyone. Well, to put it shortly, he wants to say good-bye to you."

The northeaster may subside, but it will return again to tear the shutters, to contract one's heart. It may be cold

on the hills beyond Quarantine, but the sun will shine again. Jeanne may go to her uncle in Paris, but love—love will remain. Day or night, no matter when, whether with a smile on his face or an ax in his hand, whenever “he” knocks, Jeanne, breathless, will open to him. Already there was in her mind no steamship, no stool, no kind Zaharkevitch—there was nothing but Andrew. Jeanne would see him. But how it hurt. She is on her way to Paris. She must live. Have pity on her, she has suffered so much at that dark villa.

Zaharkevitch, almost in tears at the sight of her agony, would have had pity—but love is pitiless. By the mercy of God, on that night in the study “he” had not said a word. Jeanne could not talk to “him.” To talk would be to weave, whereas the thing to do now is to hack with an ax. The day after to-morrow fate would sunder everything. The boat would weigh anchor, and Jeanne’s heart would be hewn in twain, leaving her with just enough to carry her to Paris, to live with her uncle, to work, to sob on her pillow at night, and to die.

Go without seeing him? Why, even to those condemned to death that boon is granted. To see him from afar, to carry his image away in her heart when the steamer hooted, and only to find it again on her wet pillow in her uncle’s house? No, she could not go away like that. She must see him.

“Very well. Only tell him to be silent.”

Zaharkevitch knew that silence was always best. He would tell “him.” The tryst was arranged, not in the villa, not where Andrew lodged, but outside the town, about an hour’s walk from Quarantine.

“Quarantine!” It sounded like a conspiracy to cheat Providence. Jeanne was silent, she seemed unable to realize anything. Already the terrible meeting had begun for her.

Zaharkevitch, as usual, said, "Sleep well," but for the first time Jeanne did not respond. She did not even smile or nod. Then he added: "To-morrow I am going to Moscow. Well, good-bye, Comrade Jeanne."

Laconically, automatically, Jeanne said good-bye. She simply took no notice of him. She was no longer aware that any such man as Zaharkevitch existed.

Yet the little bat-eared man who slept on the sofa in the waiting room felt no anger. It was quite natural. He was a good party worker, but who cared about his heart? Comrade Jeanne would go away, and she would never think of him again. Well, what about it? That was life.

But his heart, the heart that no one wanted, could not reconcile itself to that view. It ached, and it alone knew that Zaharkevitch was not a nurse, that for nobody, not for the secretary of his committee, not for his wife, not for his darling Bella, not for anyone did he feel such tenderness as he felt for the little French foreigner.



## IX

### *All This Was Necessary to Make the Birds Sing*

WHAT rain! Noisy, aggressive, it had poured down for three days and three nights. The roads were all washed away. A dog running across the street tucked in its tail with fear and trembling. The rain lashed its thin ribs as though with a whip. Hens in their runs ruffled up their feathers until they looked like balls. The old woman who started off on a long journey to fetch a quart of milk got little shelter from the umbrella she was so proud of. The rain was too cunning. It was so agile that it crept beneath; right and left through her coat, through the woollen shawl it lashed her old bones, aching with the damp. It was a terrific rain. Only Mother Earth was not afraid of getting wet through; the more it rained, the better she liked it. It was the kind of rain of which one says, "It came down in sheets"; the kind of rain that heralds the real spring, stirring the branches of the juniper and the roots of the wort. Moreover, it would require a great deal of such rain to usher in a spring that would warm the old woman's bones when she went out to gather sorrel, and make the birds preen their feathers and begin to sing.

At the appointed hour, among the half-ruined houses of Orlout, a Greek village, Andrew was waiting for Jeanne. He had had to wait a long time and was so thoroughly soaked that it seemed impossible he could ever get dry again even if he found a fire. There was nobody to be seen. A punitive expedition had visited the village

in the winter, and the Ossets had burned the houses, laid the women out in the yards, and driven the men away to the neighboring woods. The men had never come back. The women, after mourning their losses, had gone to the town. Only one old woman had remained. Because a passing Osset, obviously drunk, had ravished her on the day of the raid, she had lost her wits, so that whenever she met a man she would first utter a doleful wail, and then throw herself down on the ground. All the peasants who had to pass through Orlout went in mortal terror of this old woman, and would whip up their horses if they saw so much as her shadow. In spite of the downpour, the mad creature was wandering about the village. Upon seeing Andrew, she gave her usual hysterical cry and flung herself down. Andrew fled and, after a few more screams, the old woman disappeared behind the curtain of rain.

What a terrible old hag! What a poisonous place this Orlout! Over there in the leafless copse, the rain is washing the bones of twenty-seven peaceful men who had been slain while planting tomatoes. Well, that war was over, and now some of the combatants were governing the country, while others had fled across the seas to beg or to drink. And the rest? The rest, like the Orlout Greeks, lay in the salt marshes of Perekop, or in the steppes or the tundra, on the parade ground in Moscow, or in the filthy slums fringing the town. Many spring rains must indeed fall before tomatoes ripen again under human care among these ruins.

But Andrew, waiting there for Jeanne, was not thinking of all that. The questions of how to reestablish these ruined farms and how to organize the "Labor Front" were discussed incessantly on committees, but at the moment all his thoughts were for Jeanne. He looked in dismay toward

the road which seemed to be veiled by the rain. He was afraid lest he should see something moving under that downpour, something that would detach itself from that impenetrable curtain, he was afraid to see the girl for whom he was waiting with such eagerness. Perhaps she might lose her way and never get here. Perhaps he would then be glad or perhaps, in despair, he would go and dash his head against the iron gates of the Villa Ibragia. It all depended on the moment, and Andrew knew only the moments which had passed. Had he ever expected to go to the parish church with that plump, pretty girl three weeks after he had met her at the house of people who were almost strangers to him, had danced a wild mazurka, and then stolen a kiss in the passage? And at his wedding, had he dreamed for a moment that he would soon be ashamed even to look at so ill-tempered, mean, and vulgar a creature?

All Andrew's actions were impulsive. At sixteen he had quarreled with his guardian, refused his inheritance, and gone off in the company of an elderly blind woman who sang Vialtsova's<sup>1</sup> songs in the courtyards of large houses. She sang, "Give Me Oblivion in a Kiss," while he turned the handle of the organ. Why? What for? He did not know. It just happened so. Then he took up his studies seriously and passed his examinations. He became a student. A brief meeting with Jeanne, and he imagined himself in love—something might come of it; but six months later he had tied himself up in this vulgar, stupid marriage.

His life with Aglaia (that was his wife's name) had been unhappy, they were miserably poor. A little daughter was born, but she lived only seven months. When they carried

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<sup>1</sup>Vialtsova was a famous cabaret singer whose specialty was pseudo-Tzigane songs.

out her coffin this big, awkward man had cried like a child, and in his sorrow he began to drink. He felt dead himself.

Then came the Revolution. That roused Andrew. It was his first real love. In July he was fighting in the streets of Petrograd. In October he took part in the storming of the Kremlin. Then he asked to be sent to Siberia. He was caught by a White outpost and shut up in a barn, but escaped. And his escape was so miraculous that thereafter he believed in his lucky star. He made his way back to the Crimea to fight against Wrangel. But when there was no longer a definite front, when villages like Orlout had to be reconstructed, and facts and figures discussed in committees, then he grew restless. He began to ask himself where he should go now. To Bessarabia? To the West? It didn't matter so long as he could do something underground, dangerous, where military units were being raised, proclamations written, where there were fighting, shooting, death.

His companions admired him—he was brave and devoted to the cause—but with a certain aloofness. He was strange. Zaharkevitch once said gently: "In some respects, Comrade, you are not altogether a Marxist." This was probably true. Such men as he are like flags or guns. You cannot go on firing a gun indefinitely, and the best of flags will fade with constant exposure to sun and rain. They had barely begun in Moscow to draft a decree formulating the contemplated changes in taxation before Andrew began to feel that he was out of his element.

Such was the man whom Jeanne loved. It would have been futile to expect clear thought or consecutive action from him. Andrew himself could not tell what he would do. Was he capable of real love? It had all begun at Quarantine from a combination of youth and sunshine. When

Nikita had met him at the pump at two o'clock in the morning Andrew was smiling. Under the villa windows he had thought hurriedly and kindly: I expect she is asleep by now. It had seemed to him that he was in love with Jeanne, and the whole outlook was easy, bright, and happy. When he came out onto the Quay he was stunned. Everything had changed in a flash. Then Andrew had learned the meaning of grief. Jeanne's eyes had everywhere confronted him. The silence was filled by the soft cry, "Run." There was no repentance. He had had no choice. He had been compelled to shoot. Though the document had proved to be sheer rubbish, that was not his fault. He had had no means of knowing. But Jeanne? What had happened to her in that moment when he had seen her standing in the doorway?

Perhaps, having lost her, Andrew realized that that day beyond Quarantine had not been wholly the illusion of spring; had not, as he had then believed, been a passing little episode of love, but the real thing.

Sorrow had entered into his life. He had worked and he had lived to see the Reds come into their own. He had lived to see their victory. For weeks at a time he had had no roof over his head and, riding over the hills with his handful of desperadoes, he had prevented the retreat of a whole army corps and made possible the success which his efforts deserved. But these great, historical achievements did not lessen his own poor little human grief.

Andrew was fully aware that happiness would be impossible. That was probably why he had selected Zaharkevitch, who prized silence above all things. Every day, in the intervals of committee meetings, trying to cover his agitation by a businesslike tone he had asked the quiet, bat-eared man: "Well, how are things going?" And every time Zaharkevitch had given exactly the same answer:



"Pretty well." Then came a day when, after a pause, Zaharkevitch had added to his customary phrase: "She wants to go to Paris."

The committee resumed. Andrew tried to listen: . . . words, figures. Suffering no more suited this strong man than certain colors suit certain complexions. But suffering had become as real to him as the ruined homesteads. Detain her? So that she might suffer torture? No; let her go. Andrew had learned to turn the handle of the barrel organ, to live with an unloved wife, to watch a little coffin being carried out, to kill and expect to be killed. Well, he would now learn in his loneliness how to love to distraction, to death.

It only remained to say good-bye. Under the incessant rain Andrew waited for her. She was late—she would not come. He ceased to look at his watch, ceased even to think. He was merged in the rain.

The spell was broken by a hand on his arm, such a pale, lifeless hand, wet from the rain, like a branch of juniper. It was Jeanne's hand, and in response to her touch Andrew, whose smile was usually so ready, wanted to smile, but could not. Both were silent. The rain, heavy as their fate, spoke for them both.

To Jeanne, who had endured a lifetime of dark suffering in the empty villa and was used to long evenings of lonely misery, there was nothing extraordinary about a silence which seemed only the natural continuation of her daily experience. But Andrew's life had been crowded with activities, galloping on horseback, holding commands, shooting, and debating on committees. In that way his sorrow had dispersed itself in the rush of official talk and the conduct of affairs. That sorrow now faced him for the first time in all its unutterable integrity. It staggered him. He recalled that night of the outpost, and he thought now

as he had thought then, as though reading from a book: "You must clench your teeth." He remembered the message which Zaharkevitch had brought. He would die rather than speak.

But Jeanne had forgotten all about it. She could only see Andrew's lips, drawn with pain. She would give anything for a smile. He had such a dear smile. Surely he could not help smiling. He must smile. And Jeanne said, "Speak, Andrew."

The dam was broken. Meaningless words, which had long been pent up in some unseen corner, came rushing out. Where did they come from? How many years they must have struggled in his heart that they should pour out like this torrential rain.

What did Andrew talk about? His crime? His love? No, his words were a delirium. Only Jeanne, having learned from the dim mirrors of the villa that it was possible to lead a dual life, only she could have understood him. First it was the rain. It must be compared with other rains. Summer rains were quite different. Therefore Andrew—— No, that was wrong. Therefore the little boy Andrew was in the country. He thought the place was called Bikov.—Goldfinches. There is a whole family of birds called finches.—There are lots of birds in the woods, and once little Andrew had caught a goldfinch.—And, by the way, the human hand is strangely constructed. One cannot really trust it.—The bird had such soft feathers.—Probably Jeanne's hair was just as soft to the touch. Well, just imagine, just think of it, there, in the country, in full daylight, it had died. Wasn't it awful?—And you see no one could help in any way, not Mother, not even God, no one, no one.—But what did that have to do with the rain? What was he talking about? Would Jeanne forgive him? He was getting it all mixed up. That was not in the least what he had intended to say.

He was talking nonsense. But Jeanne understood everything. She knew it was not nonsense. She was all aglow with fervor and tenderness. When he stopped talking, with a great effort she raised her almost lifeless hand and passed it over Andrew's head. But—and this was the most extraordinary, the most ridiculous part of it all, more ridiculous even than the catching of the goldfinch—nobody fired, and of course everybody knows that rain does not kill, and yet Andrew, pierced by the warmth of that hand on his wet hair, sank down, sank right down to the rain-flooded earth, just as M. Ney had sunk down that night.

Fearful lest she should go away, Andrew clung to the hem of her skirt, smelling of wet wool, and kissed it.

"I—love—you—so."

Oh, how quickly flames devoured the Italian boat. Happiness here now was impossible; there was only death. Jeanne was utterly at a loss, the sensible, grownup Jeanne who was sailing next day to go and live with her uncle where life would be devoid of love. But she saw his suffering, and gently raising him said, "I will stay if you like."

Why did not Andrew cry out, "Stay"? His heart, the blood throbbing in his temples, his contracted fingers, cried, "Stay." Why were his lips alone silent? Later on Andrew tortured himself with the thought, "Why did I not keep her?" but at the moment he could give no other answer than he did. Love at its zenith can reach such sublime fullness of feeling that thought, even of happiness, is obliterated. Clearly and simply, one part of a man says, "I do not love you enough." (And his true self says, "You only.") "I am unworthy of you." ("You are my life.") "Pass by." ("Stay with me or I die.")

Andrew, lying on the wet ground at Jeanne's feet, experienced sheer bliss, in spite of his knowledge that the steamer would carry her off to-morrow to beautiful, frag-

rant roses, to another better Andrew whose name might be John or Peter—that life for her would be made as easy as swinging in a hammock, while he—he would be galloping through the night over bare hills somewhere in Bessarabia, alone with his riding whip, his thoughts, and his love.

That night in the study at the villa was still going on. It would go on forever. He would only ruin Jeanne. Then let her go, but let her go quickly. He was a changeable, an absurd man. How long would this mood last?

And Jeanne, who knew by heart all about love—Jeanne, full of tenderness and kindliness—this Jeanne believed Andrew's lips. Perhaps it was because the rain had dulled his eyes and deadened all the beating of his wild heart. It would be unreasonable to blame her; she was but a child, and she believed Andrew's lips.

She decided that Andrew was afraid of her, that she had become merely a shadow in a doorway for him, a ghost. He was young, gay, and active. What had a sad, silly child to do with him? He was in love with the Revolution. He was afraid that she would be a drag. Perhaps he was right. Why she did not even know how to ride. He was a hero. He must be left alone. She must go. The steamer would weigh anchor, and the gangways would be cast off.

"Andrew, this is forever."

He could not bear to hear such words. They were inhuman. He tossed his wet hair and answered indignantly, "No, Jeanne, no. We must meet again."

(Why did not the boat sail at once? Andrew was beginning to waver.)

"We must see each other again. Perhaps I shall come."

"Where will you come?"

"I don't know, to the West, to Paris."

Jeanne started. Paris! Papa's Paris was changing. Now, beside her uncle's house, beside the office, beside her pillow,

Andrew had appeared. She was not glad. She seemed to be losing her head, and she did so want to be rational.

"Why, Andrew?"

In a moment he would say, "I can't live without you," and then she could stay. The boat had not carried her off yet. But Andrew was firm again: "To work, to organize a revolution the same as here."

That sounded so strange, so ridiculous that Jeanne gave a little cry. Paris and revolution—what had they in common? It was as if Papa were to go about in a fur cap instead of a bowler. It was impossible. But if Andrew had said that it would be so, it would be so. And Jeanne asked with touching amazement, "Then everything will be just the same as it is here?" And, pointing to the ruined houses among which the old woman was hiding she added, "Like this? Must it be like this, Andrew?"

"Yes, Jeanne, yes, it is inevitable."

Jeanne believed him. Well, those long nights at the villa had been inevitable, too. Her head was full of the Orlout ruins, of the Rostoff typhus patients, of all the terrible horrors of the Russia of these last two years—they were all interwoven with her own fate and with her love for Andrew.

"I am going to Moscow. My wife Aglaia is there. I think you know her?" Andrew said this in the most ordinary way, and instinctively resumed the use of the formal "you" in place of the intimate "thou." Aglaia had long ago become nothing more than a name to him. But the words were like a second revolver shot to Jeanne. What a fool she had been to think of him as her husband. He was in love with somebody else. Then why had he smiled at her as he had on the Quarantine road? Why had he looked so overwhelmed when she had entered the study? Well, it was not for her to judge him. All was over. He loved Aglaia. Therefore he would



not be alone. Of course he would not be alone. He was not like poor Zaharkevitch. Jeanne was glad. Now she could go in peace without so much as turning on the deck to look at the low brown hills of Theodosia.

Quietly she answered that she did know Aglaia slightly, but had not known that she was his wife. No, she had never known that. Her voice sounded a long way off. Andrew felt that while she was still standing beside him she was receding farther and farther away from him, as though descending toward the town and the port where the steamer lay. His recent stoicism had turned to despair, almost to fury. He seized Jeanne's hands, and crushed them cruelly while he kissed them. The hands were not withdrawn, but they did not respond. There was no feeling of life in them.

Then, despising his own weakness, perhaps hating Jeanne because of all his love for her, he said huskily, swallowing and choking with his words, "Listen, don't go."

"No, I shall go to-morrow."

Jeanne said this as quietly and calmly as if she were speaking to someone who had brushed against her in the street. But it was good that it was raining, that little rivulets were streaming from her hat, so that she could cry and cry without Andrew noticing. No, she could not stay. She could bear no more of that brown stain on the carpet in the study. Of course, she was only a simple little girl from Loirette, dreaming of a bridegroom, of happiness, but she was not going to kill Aglaia. Nevertheless, the calamity came to pass. It came to pass quietly, in the dusk of the rain. Neither Jeanne nor Andrew grasped its significance at the moment. It was the surrender to love. But it was a surrender that was masked, timid, and full of wiles.

Jeanne had already passed the old well. She had begun to descend toward the Italian boat that was waiting for her when her heart suddenly yielded and began to plead with

her. Well, not now, but some day, perhaps a year from now, things might change. And with that thought she ran back quickly. Without a word she handed a tiny card to Andrew, who was still standing on the same spot.

"What's this?"

"My address, if you——"

Andrew said nothing. Sadly, gently, he kissed her half-open mouth. It was good-bye. When he found himself alone he read, "Private Detective Agency, Raymond Ney, Rue Thiboumery No. 17."

He shivered involuntarily. He must go at once. He must find a boat to-day.

And Jeanne, hastening down the hill, saw the old mad-woman. She was rolling in the dirt, moaning pitifully. To Jeanne it seemed like a hallucination, the creation of her own brain, the final episode of her meeting with Andrew. She must run, run, and she ran through the angry rain along the empty road. Somewhere a boat was shrieking as if tearing out its vitals. Early to-morrow morning she would go away to a sordid, loveless life.

And as she ran, she wept.

## X

### *Concerning the Last Drop*

THIS, thought Aglaia, is the last drop, that very last drop which makes the cup run over. Paris! He is going to Paris! They do say that there still is such a town. My sister Acia lives there. She is lucky to be where they have no putrid horseflesh, no smoky chimneys, no Revolution. It may be true, because they sing in church about a paradise that is all blue mist and ecstasy.

Aglaia is not in paradise. She is not even in Paris. She is trying to make a fire burn. A hostile wind blows down the chimney, and the smoke fills her eyes with tears.

And grief too brings tears, for Andrew is going off again, although he has only just come back.

Things had been like that all her life. When she was a schoolgirl, living with her mother in a wretched little flat in Dorogomilov Road, she often used to hear the strains of music from a factory owner's house near by. They had regular parties there with rich little cakes from Sui's shop, and dances—all those dances, like *pas de soie*, *pas de chinois*, *mignon*, and *chaçonne*, of which Aglaia knew no more than the names, and they even indulged in go-as-you-please cake-walks toward morning, when the mothers' eyes were heavy with sleep. She was not invited to the parties. They made love there. They wrote each other's names on elegant programs. At least, that was what her friends told her. Listening to the music, Aglaia used to cry, half inclined to snuggle up to her mother, half to scold her in a whispered, "What on

earth did you bring me into the world for, you witch?" She did not seriously regard life as a misfortune, however, because she was sure that she would marry and get everything she wanted, from lovemaking to a surfeit of little cakes. She did, in fact, soon marry, and though Andrew might be clumsy in expressing his feelings, he kissed her as much as she wanted. But after the first period of kisses she found life wretcheder than before. The music was still not played in her home, and there was nothing left to hope for. Andrew tried to be kind, but sometimes he broke down, clutching his head between his hands, or flinging some unkind word at her. She could see that he did not love her; but that seemed to her unnatural, even criminal. "Your husband must love you." This was not her notion of the law, but what her heart told her. "My husband is my own. I don't want yours. You shan't have mine."

Perhaps there were already a good many drops in the cup, but who can tell just how many drops that proverbial cup will hold? However that may be, the cup was at that time still far from full.

Indeed, there was a gleam of real human happiness—their daughter Sasha. Aglaia stopped demanding caresses from Andrew. She forgot the strains of the *pas de soie*. Her life centered wholly around the child, its hours of nursing, its tiny bath. And then, just as she had lost the habit of complaining about her lot, and thought instead as she read Slezkina's novelettes, or looked at views of Palermo in the Neva, "Some day Sasha will read this," or "Some day she will see that," when, in short, the process of changing a young coquette into a mother, filled with anxious thoughts of clean napkins and bottles, was well under way, Sasha died of meningitis.

It took many months to turn acute grief into a dull ache. But at last there came an evening when the music

made itself felt again, and an insistent thirst and longing for human love reawakened in her breast. Then she rushed toward Andrew, only to find herself confronted by a polite stranger who had learned to lead a life of his own. Nor could she alter the situation either by mending and remarking all his shirts, or by the purchase of an enormous violet hat trimmed with a veritable orchard. She wept in secret but was careful to remove with powder all trace of her tears, because the books which she borrowed from the lending library said that men hated tear-stained faces. She tried all the other tricks recommended by these supposedly wise books. Andrew heard with astonishment that Aglaia was very much taken with a red-mustached Treasury official, that she had invited him to call, that she might indeed go to see him herself, if only to drink a cup of tea. But evidently the Wild Rose series was as big a liar as the little yellow French books. Andrew merely shrugged his shoulders. Tastes differ.

The insatiable cup demanded more drops. The Revolution came, hardly noticeable at first. The streets were crowded, of course, and people were singing silly songs, but later it became terrifying, with hiding in cellars, night searches, waiting in queues, and, finally, it became intolerable. It was necessary to pawn the last sheet, to chew clay instead of cutlets, to "go on duty," that is, in simple parlance, to clear away the snow as the yard porters had formerly done, to conceal one's frozen swollen legs in soldiers' high felt boots, and to cry, to cry from the smoke, from grief, from everything.

Can you imagine how Aglaia, so impartially devoted to all forms of worldly enjoyment, to the strains of the *chaçonne*, Aglaia, whose sole source of comfort in times of trouble lay in the waxen faces of the icons, can you imagine how she hated the Revolution? When a Red guards-



man, marching women to work, called them "Comrade," it made her physically sick. She would have agreed to suffer all the tortures of the early Christians if only this recently recruited peasant, of whom she thought as an "executioner" and a "Latvian," could have perished at the same time, along with the whole Revolution.

And, perhaps by reason of her loathing for this indomitable Revolution, she had to suffer a further ordeal when Andrew, after the first disorders, threw in his lot with the Bolsheviks. Yes, he was one of those who requisitioned the factory owner's piano, carrying off all the *chaçonnes* forever, one of those who had desecrated the holy relics, one of those who had made thousands and thousands of Aglaia sob through the wild nights of 1919, burying their heads in their pillows lest anyone should hear them.

Aglaia found it incomprehensible. She knew that her husband was honest, that he was Orthodox. Then she found a woman's reason. Her woman's logic told her that he had fallen in love with some Bolshevik woman, perhaps a Jewess. Andrew argued the justice of the cause in vain. Aglaia was convinced that he was only trying to put her off the scent by quoting some newspaper article which he had learned by heart. You don't risk your life for an abstraction like justice. That the peasants looted the manors was easy enough to understand. But Andrew? What did Andrew want with a revolution? The simple fact was that he had fallen in love, fallen in love suddenly, madly, as once, after a mazurka, he had fallen in love with her. If only she could find the vile woman, seize her by the hair, scratch her, strangle her! But Aglaia did not even know the name of the woman who had come between them. Worse: Andrew had disappeared, had gone off to pillage Rostoff, probably with that woman as his mistress.

Aglaia, in her dark hole, waited for weeks for Andrew

to come back, gnawing bits of stale herring, so cold that she could not wash herself. Who had ever said that she was plump or that she loved dancing the mazurka? She was dreadful to look at, nothing but bones, like one of the herrings she had been gnawing, with eyes as lackluster as those of a herring, with a face looking as though it had been corroded by rust—she could barely move. If she walked two steps she began to cough, and shook with pain until she brought up bloodstained phlegm. In her labor book her age was entered as twenty-four; she looked forty.

Smoke brings many tears to the eyes, but the cup has room for all of them.

What was it that made her still cling to life? Not the herring. It seems strange, in connection with the angry, consumptive woman who lives at No. 34 and has a cough so like a bark that it frightens the street urchins—not merely a hag but a veritable witch—it seems strange indeed to use in connection with her that tender word “love,” appropriate though it may be in sentimental verses. Yet that was the truth of the matter. Aglaia loved Andrew, loved him devotedly, with all her strength, and her love alone endowed her with the power of endurance. She felt certain that some day, realizing that once a wanton means always a wanton, he would return to his wife. She could not die. She must live to get her own back from the thief.

She went to church and prayed, and as she listened to the mysterious chatter of the old women her eyes began to shine. Like the old women she expected miracles. She believed that miracles were happening: the holy icon which appeared in a cellar; or the lamp of that other icon which lighted itself; or that Communist who suddenly died from strange sores of a kind previously unknown after having sacrilegiously destroyed some holy relics. Aglaia's eyes shone. After such miracles she expected the greatest miracle

of all: the accursed Revolution would end, Trotsky would die, the Jewess would be thrown into prison as the penalty of her wiles, and Andrew, covered with shame and full of tenderness, would ask her to take him back. Well, she was a Christian; she would forgive him. And it seemed as though the miracle were beginning. It was true that Trotsky had not died, but what did Trotsky matter to Aglaia? Andrew had returned. He took off his hat. He was just the same, just as he was before. He even gave her an affectionate smile. How glad she was! But before she had time to indulge her joy, he told her that he was going away again—a long way, to the West, to Paris.

"Well, do you mean to abandon your wife here?" Aglaia asked him. "Aren't you going to take me with you?"

Andrew explained that he was going to do dangerous underground work that might mean death. But she knew how much such tales were worth—he was going on a spree with "her." No! This was really the last drop.

"You're a nice husband. Just look at me, look what has become of me. If you are a Bolshevik, if such a calamity has really befallen us, at least fix things up properly. Others have. They get the Kremlin rations. Anastasia says that the Rukys, those Communists at No. 14, guzzle caviar every day. And where on earth are you dashing off to? They've finished fighting. Stay at home!"

"I'll fix everything up, Aglaia. You shall get the rations."

"What the devil do I want with your rations? You go off with 'her' to a café chantant, while I stay here and get a pound of black bread—the Bolshevik charity ration. That's it, isn't it? Well, then, don't talk to me about justice. That isn't justice. Everything for your harlot. She must be taken to Paris. She must be hugged. What about me, your wife? Was your Bolshevik woman the mother of Sasha? She's a thief. She's stolen my life. May she——"

"Don't excite yourself, Aglaia. Please keep calm. I am going alone. Can't you realize that I must go, that I can't stay here?"

"You can't, but I can? There's no fuel. Yesterday I got four logs from Anastasia, but I can't pay them back. Just look at my feet. This is the fifth day that the bread ration has been stopped. The Chiboloff flour has all gone. It's only on Sundays that I can get a cup of tea. I'm through. I ran a splinter into my finger, and it's festered. I can hardly walk. I can't get as far as the lavatory. The beasts cheated me over my down pillow, they only gave me three pounds of flour, and that was rotten——"

Suddenly her voice changed, becoming soft and tender. It sounded like the voice of the plump girl who danced the mazurka. "Never mind all that, Andrew. It's for you—I have been waiting for you. And you won't even look at me. I know what a fright I have become. I caught sight of myself in Anastasia's mirror to-day, and my legs gave way under me. But do realize that I love you. Perhaps she is younger, prettier. She has swept you off your feet. But she has no heart, she is pitiless. Give her up. Stay here. I am your wife. That is God's word, and no decrees can alter it. I'll look after you so well. I'll go to the doctor. I'll get well, and we'll make a fresh start. I'll do my hair. I'm not really a scarecrow. My hair has been coming out ever since Sasha."

Aglaia began to sob. Andrew, half mad, strode about the room.

It was torture, torture by pity. Alternately, he would kiss Aglaia's rough hands, ready to stay here forever, to betray his cause, if only he could comfort this stranger, this unhappy woman who knew only the word "Sasha," but that one word as terrible as any spell—or he would rush to the window, from which he could see Moscow, big as the world, also unhappy, the heroic Moscow of those years. It

seemed to be waiting for Andrew to take up the work anew.

Aglaia's tears and Andrew's agitation went on for ages. It was already dark. They could no longer see each other. Moscow had disappeared, and it was as though the years had disappeared too. It seemed to Andrew that here, in this very room, a little coffin was standing on the table. He would stay. It would be his ruin, but he could not go away. Pity had ruined him. Firmly overcoming not only his grief but a feeling of physical revulsion, he gently kissed Aglaia's parched and hollow cheek. Startled by the unexpectedness of this, Aglaia cried angrily, "And whom else have you been kissing? Tell me the name of the slut."

Andrew sprang back. He was used to such questions. They usually roused in him only a feeling of disgusted astonishment. But now something strange happened to him: to himself he answered that question of Aglaia's, "Who is she?" "Of course it is Jeanne." And the dear image of the dark girl rose before him. There, amid the Orlout ruins, under that downpour, with her prominent forehead, her half-open mouth, that long, sad kiss. He felt in his breast, where his heart lay, a glow as though Jeanne's hand had touched him. What was that? Oh, yes, of course, her card, the address.

Do not deceive yourself, O heart. War and peace are not the only things: there is also No. 17 Rue Thiboumery.

Aglaia went on choking with her cough, went on scolding. She had melted for a moment under Andrew's caresses, but now she seemed bent upon paying off all old scores. Andrew was not listening to her, however. He was even glad that she was angry. Instead of his recent pity, he felt only estrangement. He did not love her. He could not help it. He would see that life was made easier for her, in the matter of rations, for instance. He was ready to do any and every thing for her, with one exception. And that was the one and only thing



Aglaia wanted. But how mend matters? Love is not a ration; it cannot be given out on food cards.

An hour later, the wheezy bang of the warped door announced that Andrew had gone, that he had not understood her love, and had run away to Paris with the creature who had separated them. Aglaia flung herself down in the corner where the icons hung, but there was no miracle. Perhaps somewhere lamps did mysteriously light themselves, perhaps some member of the Cheka had died from strange sores, but the miracle, the real, big miracle for which Aglaia was longing, did not happen. God had cheated her just as her mother had cheated her, by bringing a portionless girl into the world; just as the strains of the *chaçonne*, and the kiss after the mazurka had cheated her.

Aglaia wept, she choked with coughing. With a hand as thin as a fishbone she threatened everyone. She would strangle the lot of them, every one: Andrew's mistress, Moscow outside her window, and God, God who could help her and would not. Yes, everyone. And then, her strength failing her, she fell to the dirt- and ash-covered floor.

Was this the last drop? And indeed is there such a thing as the last drop? Is it not rather that as man lives, so his sorrows increase, and the cup grows larger? And pity? There is no pity.

## XI

### *Exactly Where the Angels Live*

‘AH, IF Aglaia could only see this Paris, she might find at least some slight consolation. For instead of blue sky there is a pall of dirty smoke, strongly impregnated with cooking oil and human excretions. No, this Paris is certainly not like paradise. Aglaia’s sister, however, has probably never seen streets of this sort. These stinking houses, oozing dubious moisture, could obviously appeal to nobody. But is this truly Paris? If you were to ask that of the disreputable-looking object in a grease-spotted dress coat, who has just come out for a breath of fresh air—that is, of smoke, oil, and urine—the object would indignantly trust out his slimy lip with its adhering, brown home-made cigarette end and snuffle, “Yes, sir, this is Paris. Wouldn’t you like to make some new acquaintances?” But no discreet person would stop in the street to speak to any such object.

So this was Paris or, to be exact, the Fifteenth Arrondissement. Aglaia’s sister would never have come here, the idea of doing so would never have entered her head. Then what about this elegant foreigner, so fashionably dressed, and with the figure of a Greek statue? How did he come to be here? A lover of adventure, perhaps? Or an enterprising tourist? There are many curious things in the neighborhood. In the Rue Morillon, for instance, there is a magnificent slaughter house, surrounded by more than a hundred little shops for the sale of wine on the premises. They are patronized by bulky cattle dealers, wearing aprons stained with the blood

of slaughtered bullocks, whose faces grow so red as they gulp down the blood-red wine that their aprons seem pale by comparison. If you turn to the left you approach a cemetery. Then come more public houses. The gravediggers or, as they call them here, the "body-eaters," peacefully chew Chinese nuts, take peppermint snuff, and after sneezing to their hearts' content, clink glasses against empty bottles, their profession being such as to give them few friends to clink with. In other, roomier taverns, there are funeral parties where mourners guzzle white wine and cheese that smells as bad as soldiers' feet. This is accompanied by much nose-blowing, due to a variety of feelings, and by the careful brushing of hired top hats—to effect the removal of cemetery dust.

Rag pickers gather in the Boulevard Pasteur at five o'clock in the morning. Occasionally, when unable otherwise to determine the ownership of a broken plate or some other fragment of refuse, they pull each other's dank hair, stiff with nits. Then they resume their task of groping through the contents of the garbage cans. No. 38 Falgner St. is a disorderly house, provided with pretty boys. Exactly opposite is the police station. There they indulge at night in a performance known as "tobacco." Young men with mustaches and smart military caps, having captured a Communist or an ordinary criminal, proceed to belabor him with an iron bar wrapped in a wet towel. This, of course, is the invention of a genius and has probably been patented, because there are no wounds at the end of the performance, so that the cause of death is not revealed. Here also are money lenders; second-hand dealers, in whose windows an enema-bag may be seen side by side with a portrait of the Empress Eugénie; veterinary surgeons; piano tuners; prostitutes; cat hunters, who hunt for the sake of the flesh, which, as everyone knows, makes an excellent rabbit stew, and also for the sake of the

skins, which add to the comfort of rheumatic old ladies; unqualified dispensers who treat venereal diseases; apaches; fleas. They all crawl into the streets, discuss the affairs of the quarter, eat potatoes baked in little stoves, drink vile wine, unfold greasy franc notes, perhaps sing some tearfully sentimental song—in a word, life here is varied and vigorous. Such is Paris—at least, a part of Paris, a part to which Cook's guides do not conduct English ladies.

Yet it was in this part of Paris that our elegant young foreigner was walking on a foggy November morning, fearlessly striding along, not afraid of losing his way or treading on anything unpleasant. He did not go to the left, so it could not have been his intention to order a tombstone for his mother. He scorned the slaughter house. Turning into a side street, he began to peer through the fog, looking for a number on gates as black, as rotten, and as foul smelling as an old woman's mouth. This indicated that the foreigner had not come out of idle curiosity, which was not in the least surprising, because good, solid firms still retained their quarters in these houses, kept there by tradition and by contempt for the fashionable boulevards. He is stopping at No. 8; in a minute he will enter the agency for Dijon mustard. Perhaps he is looking for a consignment of mustard? No; he has gone by. Then, No. 10, an office where they deal wholesale in orchard produce? Apricots are a juicy and delicious fruit and also highly profitable. No: the foreigner has crossed the road with a purposeful air. A few steps farther down he stopped in front of a big gate and passed boldly through it. His self-assurance left him for the first time, however, as he entered the courtyard. His new washleather glove went up to his nose with an involuntary movement. Owing to the prevalent gloom he could not decide whether they were relaying the drains or whether they were merely making their universally famous Camem-

bert cheese. In desperation he made for a door. An old woman sitting on its steps was gutting a fish with her long, pointed, pinlike finger. The foreigner slipped on the fishguts, staggered, but did not fall, nor did he turn back. He was determined to surmount every obstacle, made his way up a winding staircase, and reached his goal. The door was opened to him by a dirty rascal under whose decaying nose a red mustache grew luxuriantly. "Can I see M. Ney?" asked the foreigner with great politeness, ignoring alike the nastiness of the man and his facial defects. The rotten-nosed creature led the foreigner through poky corners which could hardly be called rooms. They were irregular in shape: some triangular, some without doors or windows, some like coffins. Wooden partitions, pasted over the almanacs representing many decades and with pictures of bathing beauties, cropped up everywhere, generally where they ought not to have been. One almost ran one's nose into them, and they turned the whole floor into a labyrinth. The damp ceiling was peeling and looked as though about to fall, so that the foreigner, properly proud of his height, had frequently to assume a humble stoop. Only the clicking of typewriters and frequent glimpses of blue paper file covers conveyed any suggestion that the place contained an office. Many persons were hurrying to and fro in the labyrinth: a lady in a purple plush mantle; powdered flappers in close-fitting caps; a typical *rentier*, obviously a member of the Legion of Honour, spitting as though he enjoyed it; an evil-looking creature with a yapping dog. It would have been difficult to distinguish the proprietor from his clients, and the foreigner did not attempt the task. He submissively followed Rotten-nose, merely pausing, as he passed before a mirror, to adjust his already perfect parting. Finally the last door was opened and he found himself in a room with a narrow barred window. The soul of the room was a huge safe.



Beside the safe sat a stout man whose crimson face seemed devoid of such petty details as a nose or eyes. This was M. Ney, director of Raymond Ney's highly respectable Enquiry Agency. The foreigner bowed politely, but instead of the customary acknowledgment of such a greeting, something very odd happened: the director, notwithstanding his bulk, sprang from his chair and began to clap his hands.

"Good-morning, M. Ney," repeated the bewildered foreigner.

But M. Ney ignored him.

"Gaston! Catch it! Kill it!"

Rotten-nose immediately began to imitate his master's movements. Only then did the director regain his composure and ask his visitor to sit down.

"That damned moth has robbed me—my warm waistcoat and my daughter's winter blanket. Excuse me, whom have I the honor of addressing?"

"I expect that you will find my name a little difficult to pronounce. I am the director of the Franco-Russian Export Bureau—Halibieff."

O could Aristrach, that mean waiter of the Theodosian hotel, could he but have been present at this scene. Hardened in vice though he was, he would have felt his conscience pricking. Why, he had refused Halibieff credit for a bottle of vodka. And here, not in a hole like Theodosia, but in Paris, here M. Halibieff was treated with real respect. The crease in his trousers alone proved that Halibieff no longer need spend his time sprawling on a greasy sofa, that he was at last making headway. It had begun from that evening when, fired by inspiration after having swallowed eight glasses of vodka, he had fabricated a certain document. M. Alfred Ney's franc notes had been followed by employment, and at the moment of evacuation the safe containing the cash of the municipal pawnshop easily became M. Halibieff's per-

sonal luggage. At Constantinople he made four big winnings at lotto; there too he made a large profit on a deal in Canadian dollars with a merchant who, being cut off from his friends, was terrified by Halibieff's threats to denounce him as the head of the local Cheka; then there was the voyage with the elderly English spinster, a night in her stateroom, and an emerald pendant as a parting souvenir; and at last—Paris, honor, stuffed lobsters at Vatel's, a bachelor flat, and, above all, plans for the future—audacious plans. Though but little remained of the dollars and emeralds and the like, hope was by no means on the wane. The Franco-Russian Export Bureau was founded. There were nibbles from a M. Luret, a cigarette-paper manufacturer. Halibieff carried on official negotiations with him concerning a large cargo of slightly damaged paper at such and such a price, to be delivered carriage free at Odessa one month after the Bolsheviks were overthrown. But that was only a blind. In reality, Halibieff and Luret himself were not so much interested in cigarette paper as in the fate of Luret's daughter. The whole affair had been practically settled when Halibieff heard rumors of Luret's imminent bankruptcy, and allegations that he possessed nothing beyond the cargo of damaged paper, and that if the girl got so much as three pairs of old combinations, it would be only through a stroke of luck. He pricked up his ears, and instead of making his usual call on the amiable young lady, directed his steps to the Rue Thiboumery in order to investigate the financial status of her father. Ney's office had been recommended to him as offering the best promise of secrecy. Moreover, associated as it was with the change in his fortunes, the name Ney sounded pleasant in his ears. This then was the serious business which had brought him here, so it is obvious that he could not be deterred by any amount of smells.

"I have an extremely delicate bit of business, M. Ney."

"Discretion and tact, my dear sir, are our professional duty. You can be entirely at your ease on that score."

"You see I should like to get some light on the financial standing of a certain Luret—a manufacturer of cigarette paper, No. 9 Rue Lachapelle. He has a daughter. Up to the present, I have sailed a lonely barque on the stormy seas of life. Besides, I am a refugee. I was forced to leave my country when it was seized by bandits."

M. Ney gave a sympathetic grunt, and his large fat hand patted the side of the safe as though it were alive. "A terrible misfortune. But you need have no fears here. Such things cannot happen here. You hear what I say? Utterly impossible here. Our police are worth something."

"Well, I have lost my fatherland. The bandits robbed me of my father's estates in Orloff. I am, alas, compelled to wait until a legal government is restored. Fortunately, by the kindness of the French authorities, I have been able to take out certain valuables. And that reminds me, hadn't you some relatives in Russia?"

At the sound of the word "valuables" M. Ney could not repress a faint smile. But he immediately remembered that the subject of their talk was a very sad one and tried to modify the lines of his fat, moonlike face to give it an appropriately sorrowful expression.

"My brother! Poor Alfred! They killed him, the savages!"

"I was fortunate enough to know your late brother. He was a man of rare distinction. He was a friend of mine, a great friend. We were collaborating in a plan to save my unhappy country. He died at his post. So many were lost, M. Ney. But those who were saved must live. That is the law of nature, is it not? So, with your permission, I will return to business. I have managed to save something in the

shape of very profitable shares in the 'Azerbaijan oil fields. They are managed by an Englishman—intensive production. As for dividends—— But of course you don't know Azerbaijan."

And with the eloquence of Scheherazade, the ardent Halibieff began to unfold all the marvels of the East. M. Ney grew more and more flushed with excitement. A wonderful country Azerbaijan, not in the least like the Fifteenth Arrondissement of Paris. Gold spouts up from under the earth! M. Ney was a little astonished that Halibieff calculated all the profits in Canadian dollars. But Halibieff soon settled that. He even expressed amazement: was it possible that M. Ney did not know that much, that he, a business man, did not know that all the Azerbaijan petroleum went to Canada? He talked as one inspired, and filled the whole room with the images to which his brain gave birth moment by moment. This man was certainly at times a poet, who had been wont to work up to an ecstasy of fervor the round-eyed fools of the Moscow cafés. How well he talked! With every word, every figure, he secured a firmer hold on this hard, greedy man who was experiencing for the first time the blandishments of art. He had forgotten the original purpose of his visit. The cigarette-paper maker no longer concerned him. "There is no smoke without a fire," and the bailiffs might already be knocking at Luret's door. But here—what a field! How touching this big fool was, listening with all his pig's ears to fairy tales about petroleum! He had been lucky with one brother, why shouldn't he be lucky with the other as well? Behind all the dubious smells of the wretched office Halibieff savored the scent of money. This was a big thing, capital, like a juicy pear, ripe and ready for picking! Hurry, Halibieff, the spirit of Pollux is blessing you from Cherkessoff Lane.

But M. Ney, while listening to Halibieff, was not merely

drinking in his words. His active brain was at work, formulating plans of his own. The rich foreigner wishes to marry. He is wealthy—that is good—a foreigner and therefore a simpleton, of whom a true Frenchman could get the better with the utmost ease. Canadian dollars were not quite so good as the ordinary ones—they stood at eleven francs to the dollar—still, it meant money, a lot of money. And once more M. Ney patted his safe.

He loved money, loved it devotedly, tenderly, one might almost say selflessly. His was the mystic feeling of the avowed collector. To this love he was ready to sacrifice everything. Though he suffered from the cold, he would not buy himself a new waistcoat to replace the one ruined by the thievish moth—a new waistcoat would cost ninety francs. M. Ney's capital touch a million and a half. But does love take into consideration the arguments of reason? When, therefore, owing to the fog, two gas jets had to be lighted in the office, he would stand beside his abacus and moan: "The silly asses; they have weak eyes, if you please." That was why the old pen nibs were never thrown away but were put into a special box to be renovated by a process which M. Ney had learned from a tear-off calendar. That was why M. Ney's daughter had given up violin playing. A crank from the floor below had given her free lessons for two years, but he went away to Algiers. Of course, M. Ney loved his daughter, but where was he to find the means to satisfy all her whims?

The only thing that M. Ney recognized besides money was food, but not restaurant food, sheer robbery, with its sauces, and everything priced at three times its value, and which left you hungry after all—no, food cooked at home, sensible food, food that stuck to your ribs. His two favorite dishes were snails à la Bourgogne and bacon fat. With a one-pronged, broken fork he would drag the snail from its



shell and close his eyes in ecstasy when it proved to be a fat one. He ate the bacon fat without bread, a plateful at a time. Sometimes he would have liked a second plate, but he remembered the cost of living and promptly curbed his craving.

His capital was growing, growing slowly but steadily. That, however, did not mean that its growth must always be slow. If he could only find a suitable partner, he could double, nay, treble, it at once. M. Ney's plans were laid. No, he was not listening to Halibieff just for the mere pleasure of listening.

"I am very pleased to make your acquaintance, M. Halibieff. We will take your business in hand. I am afraid to say much in advance, but—you know yourself that the air is full of rumors. I have heard something of this M. Luret. A cargo of damaged paper, you say? Yes, yes. I am sorry to disillusion you, dear M. Halibieff, but truth before everything. You came here for the truth. Oh, large-hearted foreigners are so often shamelessly cheated in Paris. I fear—I fear—I fear that this manufacturer's reputation is—ha, ha—as badly damaged as his paper. Of course we will get exact details. My bureau—pray do not think that I am boasting—is the best in Paris. One department alone, the one devoted to divorce cases, brings in as much as two hundred thousand a year. We are strictly honest. Other bureaus take money in advance from husband and wife alike and then lead both of them by the nose. But we—he, he—either cover up the sin or, so to say, get the police officials to affix the seal. Oh, we are well known in Paris. You noticed Gaston, the man who brought you to me? He is not a mere detective, he's pure gold, like your petroleum. It is as though he sprang from the soil to enrich me."

Now it was M. Ney's turn to entertain his guest with fairy tales. But Halibieff did not lose his head. He pricked up

his ears and, like a chess player, waited for his opponent's next move.

"Believe me, we will do everything in our power. I understand your feelings. A man needs his own fireside. Alas, I have been a widower for years. I live with my daughter and solely for the sake of my daughter. Yes, yes, I understand you perfectly. An honorable man finds marriage difficult, especially in a foreign country."

"Thank you, M. Ney. I am much touched and am glad that I had the good fortune to come to you. Your brother was my best friend. If I were not afraid of appearing importunate, I should beg for the happiness of being presented to your daughter."

"Hmm, of course. But, as a matter of fact—I must warn you. My daughter has a wonderful disposition. And she is very beautiful. Don't be surprised—ha, ha—she takes after her mother, not after me. But the poor child suffers. She has one defect. It may be that it is the cause of her goodness. I imagine that people with her affliction are very easy to get on with. Life is so dismal that it is really better not to see it. Poor Gabrielle will make an ideal wife. They wanted to cure her, but it would have cost an enormous sum, and all my capital is tied up."

"Pardon me, M. Ney, but permit me to ask what your daughter is suffering from?"

"Oh, nothing dangerous. She—she——"

M. Ney had no time to finish his difficult explanation. A small door leading from the office to the Neys' flat opened, and a young girl in a hideous print frock appeared on the threshold.

It is a mistake to believe that angels foregather only in sacred places; that in Paris they are to be found only a long way from the Rue Thiboumery near St. Sulpice, or in the shops of church furnishers, where they smilingly support

a tabernacle, hold open the Acts of the Apostles, bow in ritual homage before the Holy Virgin, or stand guard above the slumber of the rich benefactors of Roman Catholic seminaries. No, those angels are made of plaster of Paris, gilded over with bronze powder. While here, in this ill-smelling bureau, in this most unspeakable part of the Fifteenth Arrondissement, far away from St. Sulpice and other such holy places, here stood a living, breathing, smiling angel.

On seeing the face of this girl with her large (perhaps too large) blue eyes, and her loose golden hair, Halibieff thought to himself, "Yes, she really is beautiful—but what a dress! Cinderella!" The girl ran to the chair in which M. Ney was sitting, fell on her knees by his side, and began to cover his fat hand with kisses.

"Good-morning, Father."

She had a deep contralto voice, which was unexpected, and caught one suddenly, as though it came from afar. M. Ney was about to introduce her to the attractive foreigner when Rotten-nose rushed into the room, manifestly excited.

"What am I to do, M. Ney? I got that Saltpetière a splendid photograph: his wife and her love in their underclothes. I had to pay a double fee to the hotel proprietress. I asked him for the extra amount, but he doesn't seem inclined to pay anything. He just sits there and bleats like a kid."

"You'd better go to see him at once. Make him pay up fully or we will sue. Let me see, you have to go by motor bus? Well, don't forget to charge your fare."

The girl did not seem to hear this conversation. Nestling up to her father, she whispered, "Father, I have had an awful dream. You were screaming like a child. And then a bell tolled, as if at a funeral."

M. Ney stroked her golden hair.

"Dreams are all nonsense, Gabrielle. Dreams are only for little children, and you are grown up now. You are old enough to be married. Let me introduce you. This is M. Halibieff. He was poor Uncle Alfred's best friend."

The girl rose, stretched her hands in front of her, and gazing straight at Halibieff with unclosing eyes said, "Why does he breathe so loud? Perhaps he is a Negro? Or a criminal? Father, what are his hands like? I am afraid of him."

Halibieff could stand no more. Full of superstitious dread, he cried, "Why, she is blind!"

## XII

### *Concerning All the Advantages of Being Blind*

HALIBIEFF went straight to Gabrielle's room. It was only three weeks since his first visit to M. Raymond Ney, but three weeks is a considerable time, especially in the hands of a man of talent. By the assurance with which he found his way among the intricacies of the labyrinth, by the respectful though somewhat familiar greeting of Rotten-nose, by the way in which M. Ney's fat melted into a smile, by all this and much more, it was evident that the Azerbaijan oil had done its work.

"He will marry Gabrielle and put all his capital into my business," thought M. Ney, contentedly patting his safe. And that pride and pillar of the bureau, the detective Gaston, would say to his wife, "He's the only one that'll ever be able to get the better of me." "He will soon be our master," squeaked the bent, rusty pens renovated by M. Ney's method.

Halibieff did not hurry. He was anxiously awaiting the opportune moment for gutting the mystic safe. The thought of Gabrielle gave him some discomfort, because, say what you like, he would have to marry that blind creature. The key to the safe lay under the bridal pillow. It would, of course, be easy enough to make her marry him. He had managed that night in the stateroom of the bald rat of an Englishwoman. The girl would make no difficulties. A man who had seduced society leaders would not find it hard to



make this unfortunate idiot fall in love with him. His merest touch ought to seem to her a gift from paradise. That would be all right. And yet Halibieff had to admit to himself, stupid and contemptible though it was, that he was afraid of the blind chit. When she fixed her unclosing blue eyes on him he lost countenance, felt nervous, twisted in his chair, or hid his hands in his pockets. What disgusting cowardice! It was time to overcome it!

And that very morning, seated in the barber's easy chair, his eyes half shut with the pleasure of feeling a master hand lather his delicate cheeks with the badger-hair shaving brush, Halibieff had been framing a plan of attack. The scissors chirped pleasantly, like a cricket, the eau de Cologne felt as refreshing as tropical rain, and the air of importance which characterized the barber as he singed the tips of Halibieff's silken hair with a wax taper seemed to emphasize his appreciation of all the magnificence and subtlety of his client. That evening he was to have a piquant supper with Tonette of the Folies Bergères. Wasn't it good to be alive? But there was that blind girl. No. He must screw himself up to the pitch. When the barber began ecstatically smoothing the superb eyebrows of the Russian prince with a special brush Halibieff knew beyond a doubt that he must bring the affair to an issue to-day.

With a resolute air, Halibieff entered Gabrielle's room. The blind girl seemed to be waiting for him. She had long since lost her fear of the charming foreigner who called on her father every day, who had a ringing, kindly laugh, who brought her chocolates, who was neither a Negro nor a criminal but the friend of her father, the friend of her uncle, the Neys' good genius. She liked his voice, full and sonorous as a clap of May thunder. When they met she would smile at him confidently, like a child. She would thank him for the sweets and say, "You are kind. You are

like a fairy prince." Her fear of his quick, predatory hands was the sole reminder of her horror at their first meeting. Once, on entering, Halibieff had retained her hand for a moment, and, unable to bear it, she had given a little cry and fled from the room. Was she expecting him to-day? When she heard his firm, decisive footstep her face lighted up.

How beautiful she is, this blind girl of the Rue Thiboumery. But Halibieff was in no mood to admire her. Clenching his teeth, with hatred in his heart, he held out a large bouquet of roses.

"What is it? It smells."

"These are flowers, the most beautiful, the most expensive flowers. They are red roses. I have brought them for you, Gabrielle."

Gabrielle did not know the meaning of the word "beautiful," but as she took the flowers she herself became more beautiful. She did not know the meaning of the word "red," but her cheeks reddened with excitement.

"For me? All these for me? You are not just a man, you are a prince."

Poor Gabrielle. No one had ever brought her roses. All she knew was the office, smelling of perspiration and gas. She had thought that nothing but a fairy palace could be better than the office. Her father and Gaston with his eroded nose seemed to her most charming. When she was a little girl a neighbor had read Perrault's fairy tales to her, and that was all she knew of life. And now happiness had come. How deeply she breathed! She tingled to the tips of her intertwined fingers!

"I want to talk to you, Gabrielle. My life is sad. I am alone, absolutely alone. You have a father who loves you. I have no one, no one in the whole world."

Halibieff really had artistic temperament. He was not

only a potential poet, but the sacred art of the drama had lost in him a great actor. Listen to the tremolo in his tones. Gabrielle notices a new, ringing note of vibration in his voice, such as she has heard in voices that speak on the verge of tears. She is shaken. She hardly believes that such unhappiness can be. She had thought herself unhappy when they took away her violin. That was stupid of her. Here was true unhappiness. He had no father. If only she could help him. But she could only weep. Tears fall from her blue eyes, and those pure, unmoving eyes, without expression, and without a quiver, stare fixedly at Halibieff. Gabrielle rises and moves toward him.

That is more than Halibieff can bear. He shrinks back. Devil take it all, how long is he going to be afraid of this idiot? If she is blind, so much the worse for her. That is no reason for being scared. It is time to bring this farce to an end. Halibieff himself takes a few steps forward. "I have not told you the most important thing, Gabrielle. I met you. You irradiated my life. You are like those roses for me."

Gabrielle is afraid; she trembles. What! She, the poor, stupid girl, laughed at by the boys on the floor above, she the blind Gabrielle, is like these flowers! Yes, he is a magician, his wand has touched her. What if he should be able to make her see?

"Gabrielle, you are everything in the world to me. Let me tell you the secret of my heart; I love you, only you."

What new and terrifying words! How difficult to understand all at once! Perhaps the boys are right in saying that she is pitifully ugly. She cannot understand anything. It must be because she is blind; her father always says that her eyes are not like other people's.

Gabrielle is silent. She can find no answer. But Halibieff is tired of waiting. This fool must be approached differ-

ently. He went close to her. For a moment he even envied her blindness: it is sometimes best not to be able to see what you are doing; for example, if he could but imagine that this was the jolly Tonette from the Folies Bergères. Shutting his eyes in sheer fury, he firmly pressed his lips on hers.

Gabrielle gives a little cry. Then she smiles. But her tears do not cease; indeed, they multiply—large, rapid tears. She begins to understand a little. You see it is only in her eyes that she is different from other people. Eyes are not everything; are there not these warm lips which have only just realized that they are alive? Is there not a heart which can find its way to another heart in the darkness without a guide? Yes, Gabrielle can love. She whispers, "I am very stupid. My father says that I am a burden. Up till now I have only known love for my father and my violin. They took it away. You are very tall. Your voice sounds like the chime of the dining-room clock. You are a Russian. You are love. With you to teach me I shall learn the meaning of all the words. I shall understand what 'beauty' is. I think I know already. It is beautiful here, isn't it? And with your coming it became more beautiful. There must be roses on the walls, many roses. I can smell them. Gaston has told me about the sea. When Father smiles his cheeks have a living movement, and I think that the sea must be like that. Can you hear? That is Gaston laughing in the office. It is like a bell, but the poor bell always has a cold. I am so happy with you."

Halibieff listened to this babble with disgust. He gazed at the greasy partitions—roses indeed! And Papa's cheeks! And the snuffling laugh of Rotten-nose! What he wanted was to spit; but he restrained himself in time and murmured, "You are right. When one is in love, everything seems like paradise. And I love you. I want you to be my wife."

"I will be everything to you. I can knit—I will knit you a woollen cap. I will wash the floor. And, when my eyes are like other people's, you will take me to the sea. I could die of happiness at this moment, my heart throbs so. But I am afraid of death because the tolling of the bell is so awful. I want you to kiss me again."

It cannot be helped. He must go through with it. Halibieff had made up his mind to stop at nothing. He takes her in his arms. But then something happens which neither of them had expected. Gabrielle starts back, crying: "Not with your hands. I am afraid of your hands."

But she is immediately ashamed. How can she be afraid of his hands? It's impossible. It's horrid. The boys are right. She is a fearful monstrosity. Gabrielle runs to Halibieff, kneels before him, and begins to kiss his quick, nimble hands.

"Do forgive me. It shall never happen again. I will take your hands to me. I will cherish them. I will love them."

Halibieff is satisfied. The most unpleasant part of the business is over. Now I can go home, change, and dash straight off to Tonette. And then—the naïf papa, the matrimonial contract, the cash, and then—let them whistle for him. At this moment, however, he must take his departure in such a manner as to make Gabrielle feel all the bitterness of parting.

"Alas, dear Gabrielle, I must leave you. Business, accursed business. But we shall soon be together, together day and night, together all our lives. *Au revoir*, my beloved. I shall see you to-morrow."

Halibieff bows, but having bowed, realizes that the blind girl cannot appreciate either his bow or the woe-begone expression on his face. Gabrielle is still on her knees, smiling ecstatically. No, none of the angels in the shops round St. Sulpice can smile so tenderly, so wistfully.



But the smile infuriates Halibieff. So do the blue eyes. She cannot see him. Then why stare at him? He cannot stand those eyes. "Good-bye, my dove." And, looking at those insufferable, unmoving eyes, in fear and anger he insolently sticks out his big, red, fleshy tongue.

### XIII

#### *Home at Last*

PARIS was greeting the New Year—greeting it with merri-ment and noise. After a hot summer, wine was plentiful. After victory, other people's coal was plentiful. After years of war, sorrow was plentiful. Paris knew that if she were to light all the lamps of the great inner and outer boulevards, if she were to open all the bottles of champagne, or Burgundy, or Bordeaux, or Saumur, or Touraine, or Vouvray—if she did all this, then, at least for one night, she might drive sorrow beyond the trenches of the old fortification, somewhere to the north among the still black ruins of the little Picardy towns.

In the large restaurants, jazz band drums were crashing, corks were popping, the dinner jackets of elegant young fops were pressing against the salmon-colored bodies of young beauties as they glided in a fox trot. In the little bars vagrant musicians and professional fire eaters were amusing the customers. Little lamps lent a fairy-like aspect to the street booths where nougat, crackers, and Nice violets were on sale. Stall keepers trading at the crossroads could not open their green Portuguese oysters fast enough to keep pace with the demand. Children to whom pomegranates had been given were falling asleep nibbling the innumerable seeds. Everyone was having a good time. Even the quack dispensers were dancing the shimmy and talking of love. The very prostitutes from the Rue Thiboumery, having

washed their feet and put on clean camisoles, were smiling like schoolgirls.

Is it not a joy to see Paris on a night like this? Is it not a joy to come straight to these boulevards from the wild land of the northeaster and fur caps?

Yet Jeanne Ney, gazing through her cab window at the electric bulbs of the advertisements, at the procession of roisterers migrating from bar to bar, at the gaudy paper roses with which a mustached orange woman had decked her barrow, felt no joy. On the contrary, the farther her cab took her from the Gare de Lyon, though she had at last reached her native land, the sadder Jeanne grew.

Many months had elapsed since the day on which the smoke of the Italian steamer had for the last time obscured the leather helmets of the Red Guard, the Tartar urchins, the tug with the red flag, the alien skies.

On arriving at Constantinople Jeanne had become ill. She was admitted to a hospital attached to a Roman Catholic convent. There it was found that she had inflammation of the lungs. Her exhausted organism recovered slowly. In the autumn, when she decided to continue her journey at any cost, she found that she had no money. For three months she took a place as governess with a mustached Greek woman who was particularly anxious that her daughter should sound her rrrs like a Parisian.

At last seven hundred francs were saved up, and Jeanne left Constantinople, that city of jasmine and tears.

The drive from the Gare de Lyon was, so to say, the last stage of her long journey, but the sight of her dear and charming Paris brought her no joy. To Jeanne it seemed rather that she was being deported, carried into exile, cruelly separated from Andrew. When she had at last seen Marseilles, warm, olive-clad, noisy, she was not glad—it was not there that she had met Andrew. The sound of her

native tongue left her unmoved; it was not the language in which Andrew had talked to her. He had said, "Listen, don't go." In French that would have been a polite phrase, but in Andrew's language it had been harsh and brought ruin in its train, like the northeaster. He had said, "Don't go." Then why had she gone? Why had she so unresistingly, so uncomplainingly, relinquished her chance, her place in life, so to speak, to a stranger called Aglaia? Jeanne could not remember what she looked like, but it seemed to her that only a very gay, a very beautiful and very cruel woman could take Andrew away from her—a woman in rustling black, something like the Queen of Spades. Jeanne felt no ill will toward her. She even wished her happiness. But who can say how hard it is to give up life at twenty? And her life had stopped there, in Russia. And in anguish Jeanne recalled all sorts of little details: even the fur caps seemed dear to her now.

Here everything was tumultuous and gay with many brilliant lights; there, there had been one solitary lamp on the Quay, and even that had long ago been extinguished. But could the café windows shine as Comrade Zaharkevitch's eyes used to shine when he looked in on Jeanne after returning from a late meeting? Here there were violins, flutes, noisy jazz bands, but could not the northeaster shout them all? Could Andrew gallop along these streets after a victorious skirmish? It was crowded, crowded and stifling. And Jeanne, letting down the window to get a breath of air, thought to herself: He was right. There must be a revolution here. Things must be made the same here as they were there.

Here is the Rue Thiboumery. On her journey, when worn out, Jeanne would sometimes console herself with the thought: When I get home I shall rest. She had never seen either her uncle Raymond or her cousin. But she had pic-

tured them as living in a little white, wisteria-covered house, like her father's at Loirette. Her uncle doubtless read the *Journal des Débats* while her cousin playfully teased him with interruptions. There Jeanne—poor aged Jeanne—would find a little repose.

The cab stopped. The wrinkled driver in his shiny top hat helped Jeanne to get out, even carried her luggage to the door of the bureau.

"Home at last!" he cried.

Home at last, thought Jeanne as she passed quickly into the study. What met her gaze could not be reality—it must be a dream, a terrible dream. It seemed to Jeanne that she had had that dream a long time ago, in her childhood. Then she had screamed and awakened her mother. Now she could not scream. She would never wake. The dream would last forever.

Rotten-nose stood in the middle of the room, holding a glass of sparkling wine. M. Ney was greedily mouthing a snail and hiccupping loudly. In a large armchair sat an awful man with a revolting face whom Jeanne had seen somewhere. He was pressing to his side a wild-looking girl who stared at Jeanne with unmoving eyes. The man was obviously drunk. No one paid any attention to Jeanne. She stood bewildered in the doorway, holding her suitcase. Suddenly the girl's voice said: "I can hear—there is a stranger here."

At that they all looked up. Rotten-nose, having just drained his glass, tittered, "You've come to the wrong house. You want the second house on the right. Our office is always closed at night."

Remembering the photograph which had stood on her father's table, Jeanne turned to M. Ney: "I am Jeanne."

Owing to the champagne brought by the generous Hali-bieff, or owing to four dozen snails, M. Ney was in a state



of extreme apathy. He therefore did not evince the slightest surprise at this sudden appearance of his niece. He merely muttered, "They all climb onto my neck. My capital is tied up. I'm a pauper myself."

No, even the Ossets who had attacked the cart in which she was escaping with her father had been kinder than this. She timidly begged permission to stay the night at her uncle's flat. Her money had been only just enough to bring her there. She had nowhere else to go.

"All right. You can sleep in the office. You'll have to be up by seven, because we have clients even on holidays. Meanwhile, sit down. You see? We're merrymaking. We're greeting the New Year. You make merry too."

Having tired himself by so long a speech, M. Ney swallowed another snail and fell into a doze. The sounds of his disjointed hiccoughing gave way to a regular snore. Rotten-nose twirled his mustache, and whispered a smutty story into Halibieff's ear. Halibieff chuckled with relish. And Gabrielle? Gabrielle was happy: at last the kind prince was with her. She nestled up to Halibieff like an affectionate dog. She asked him to pour out another glass of wine.

"Cousin, I can hear that you are good. You are very good. You are like him, like my Russian. I don't know you, but I want to stroke your forehead. I feel ashamed in your presence, Cousin, I am too happy. Will you drink to our happiness?"

"Splendid! To the health of the happy couple! To the prosperity of the Private Enquiry Agency," obligingly snuffled Gaston.

She is nice, though she is queer, thought Jeanne. But he? He's a Russian. I've seen him somewhere. But where? Ah, yes, at Papa's, on that day. He is a bad man. I don't know exactly what he was doing at Papa's, but I am sure that it was something bad. Poor girl, she's blind.

"Kiss me, Cousin," said Gabrielle.

Jeanne went up to the blind girl and was about to kiss her cheek when Gabrielle offered her eyes to be kissed instead.

"They are not like those of other people."

Jeanne, kissing her, whispered, "They are better than anyone's." Halibieff smiled. He had been staring greedily at Jeanne all the time. He had at once recalled the door of Alfred Ney's study and the girl with the tear-stained eyes. This was a real bird. She was worth all the Tonettes in the world. He was drunk. Therefore, as he riveted his eyes on Jeanne, on her half-open mouth and dark neck, he found it hard to control his longing to fling himself on her. Profiting by Gaston's absence from the room for a moment, he sprang to Jeanne's side and caught her lips between his own wet ones. Jeanne did not lose her presence of mind. A short, sharp sound followed.

"What is it? Friend, where are you? I am sad without you," cried Gabrielle.

"Your cousin dropped a book. I rose to pick it up." Halibieff was trying to cool his burning cheek with the palm of his hand.

"Spitfire!" he cried angrily, but in Russian. "I shall make you mine in spite of your bad temper. I want you, and once I, Halibieff, want anything, I keep on till I get it. I'll swallow you, you dainty morsel!"

His drunken bass roused M. Ney's adiposity, and he muttered in astonishment, "But, dear M. Halibieff, why have you suddenly begun to talk in your incomprehensible language?"

"I wanted to please your niece. She has lived so long in Russia. She may perhaps like to hear its language, which must recall so many memories. I was speaking of your brother's goodness."

Jeanne did not attempt an answer. She passed silently to the corner indicated to her and lay down on the sofa.

So this is the room in her uncle's home where it will be Jeanne's lot to weep, to work, to live. How she will live, what work she will do, Jeanne does not yet know. But weep here she can.

She is weeping already. Oh, to be back again at the Villa Ibragia! Oh, to see Zaharkevitch's ears through the half-open door. To stand all one's life in the rain, stroking Andrew's wet hair. It was all her own fault. Loving, she had tried to think, she had wanted to be good, sensible, magnanimous, whereas, when one loves, there is only one thing to do—to love. She was unworthy of love. She had gone away and left Andrew. All she could do now was to lie in this awful torture house and weep.

And Jeanne wept.

In the study they are still clinking glasses and laughing. And irrepressible Paris is making merry in the Rue Thiboumery and in all its other score of police divisions. But perhaps in out-of-the-way corners, where the windows are unlighted, where there are neither jazz bands nor popping corks—perhaps there are other Jeannes weeping on this New Year's Eve.

Perhaps not all the sorrow has been driven beyond the town fortifications to the ruins of Picardy. Who knows? It is against the law to enter the dwellings of others at night.

## XIV

### *The Bolshevik Spy*

TEAR STAINS are washed off in the morning. In the morning Jeanne stood before M. Ney, whose fat was shaking in indignation.

"I am not addicted to charity. I am not rich enough to indulge in family feelings. Still, Alfred was my brother. Do not thank me. I cannot bear sentimentality. You can sleep on the sofa in the office and you can eat with us. We don't go in for sauces. For this you will have to work. Gaston will show you everything. Now go along."

Jeanne went to the office. Although it was a holiday, a crowd of people were waiting: neither jealous husbands nor greedy creditors wanted to lose a single hour. So began her new life.

From morning to night Jeanne registered abominable papers of all kinds: anonymous letters, the evidence of lodging-house keepers, the accusations of servants, intercepted letters. Other people's loves had a good money value here. Kisses shaped themselves into the large seals of police protocols, and tears—the tears of detected sinners and pitiless plaintiffs were calculated here in francs. Jeanne handled these papers with disgust. There is no love in Paris. For how can one give the name of love to the letter of the grocery-shop owner who pursues her husband day and night with four detectives, who catches his mistresses, who wrangles with him over the price of his freedom, and cries and cries, covering with dirty blotches the bills from M.

Ney's bureau, the accounts of the mistresses, her prayer book, and finally the front of her own satin skirt? If Jeanne had the making of the laws she would forbid such persons to utter the word "love." She, Jeanne, knew what love meant. She had made the discovery far away from here in a land of revolution, cold, and heroes. There was only one way of escape: to run, to run to Andrew, to run to Moscow. At night she would think out ingenious and ridiculous plans for running away, like a schoolboy who makes up his mind to run away to the land of the Indians after having gorged himself with Fenimore Cooper.

Her uncle did not talk to her. He regarded conversation with a pauper as unpardonable extravagance. Sometimes, however, he would stop thoughtfully in front of the sofa on which Jeanne slept and say: "Be good enough not to toss about at night. All the springs are broken. Do you know how much it would cost to repair them?"

Sometimes in the evening Gabrielle would come, and they would sit for a long time in silence with their arms round one another. Gabrielle was too full of her own happiness to speak of anything else. What could Jeanne answer? Could she translate the words which Halibieff had used in the study? No, never! Jeanne knew what love was: she was silent. It was well that Gabrielle could not see. After such evenings Jeanne felt more unhappy than ever, her little pillow was wetter at night, and the thought of escape became more urgent.

But in the morning all the plans so carefully thought out at night appeared absurd. Jeanne decided to trust to luck. On her first free day she went to look for the Russian Consulate. There they would tell her how to get to Moscow, perhaps even give her a ticket. But where was this consulate? There are so many streets in Paris.

Jeanne walked straight in front of her, turning neither to



right nor left. Suddenly, near the station of Montparnasse, she heard someone speaking Russian. Two elegant ladies were coming toward her. Jeanne ran to them; she explained that she wanted to go to Moscow, that it was absolutely necessary for her to go to Russia, that if she stayed here she would die, that she must go immediately. Where was the Russian consul? Surely they would help her? Jeanne spoke rapidly, incoherently, afraid lest the women who had come from Andrew's country should leave her and that she would have to go back to the hateful Rue Thiboumery. It took a little time for the astounded ladies to understand her meaning, long enough for one of them to drop her parcel.

"The Russian Consulate is in the Rue Grenelle. But there they only help those who have got out of Russia, not those who want to go there. My dear, one can't go to Russia at present. There is no Russia. There is only a Bolshevik hell."

Jeanne, however, did not wish to understand the emotional accusations of these ladies. She persisted: "No, no, I must go to Moscow, quickly, at once——"

Filled with disgust, one of the ladies, the one who had dropped her parcel, turned to her friend: "Come along, Marie. She must be a Bolshevik spy. Look at her impudent eyes."

Tears then rained down from those impudent eyes. She got back home late that evening. Perhaps there was a Bolshevik consul in Paris? Paris was so big and this consul did not hang out a signboard. Jeanne had hastened along many streets. She had called at the wicked place in the Rue Grenelle. But no one would tell her how to get to Moscow.

She went to her corner to lie down. She heard Halibieff's rich bass from the study: "Assuming the privileges of a prospective relative, my dear M. Ney, I venture to tell you that your niece is a thoroughly bad lot. Even in your

unhappy brother's lifetime she made most indecent advances to me."

There was a pause, and then there was a sudden wild roar of laughter from M. Ney. "Really? Well, thanks for telling me, old man. We, ha, ha, shall make the obvious deductions."

"Andrew," whispered Jeanne, "Andrew, surely you will protect me?"

But Andrew was far away. At that moment, looking down on snow-covered Moscow, Andrew was repeating, "Thiboumery, Thiboumery," and the name of the dreadful slum where the defenceless Jeanne was tossing sounded unspeakably sweet to him.

## XV

### *Concerning Words Which Know No Love, and Love Which Knows No Words*

JULES LEBEAU, the great writer, lived in a private house in that quiet Rue Saint Père which is so beloved of actors and bibliophiles. All Paris knew this, and all Paris longed to get inside the iron gates of the mysterious mansion. But Jules Lebeau was old, his attacks of palpitation and spells of faintness became more and more frequent, his legs were swelling, and he had not long to live. Therefore he trembled as greedily over every remaining hour as M. Raymond Ney did over every hoarded franc. No one was admitted to his presence. This gave rise to rumors. Not only little ladies over their tea at Rumpelmeyer's, but literary critics on the evening papers began to allege that Jules Lebeau, now in his dotage and full of vice, arranged orgies in which nuns, Russian Bolsheviks (formerly prisoners of war), rejuvenated hermaphrodites, and even monkeys participated.

And when Jules Lebeau declared in one of his books that he realized the inevitability of revolution in the near future, and that he rejoiced in that inevitability—in short, when he became an avowed enemy of society—then these rumors became satirical articles. The boldest were ready to assert that Jules Lebeau was devoid of talent, or that, at any rate, he had written himself out. But as the reading public had been taught from childhood not simply that he was a writer, but that he was a “great” writer, nothing came of it all.

Even the virtuous Academicians, to whom nothing was so hateful as revolution, were compelled to award the latest

prize of eighty thousand francs to none other than Jules Lebeau for his book, *The Conclusions of Monsieur Bege-motte*, which was in essence a cruel satire on the Academy and many other things that were close to the hearts of its jury. But what was to be done? Of course, revolutionists should be shut up in the Santé Prison, of course one should spend twice, nay, ten times, as much on the secret police—still—Jules Lebeau was a great writer. And, having awarded the prize, the members of the jury, taking their aperitif vermouths and rubbing their knees, told each other stories like these:

This Lebeau is quite mad. He has shut himself up in his den, and there he has arranged a marriage between the one and only subscriber to *L'Humanité* and an anthropoid ape sent by some insane San Francisco admirer. We shall certainly see something spicy to-morrow.

But Jules Lebeau refused to see the members of the jury when they arrived to congratulate him. This was of course very impolite, but he set a high value on his time.

However, the members of the jury missed nothing: there were neither nuns nor apes in the house. The only other person who lived there was Mlle Falette, the old housekeeper who made Lebeau's coffee every morning and, when he had pains, brought him a hot-water bottle or a bag of ice.

Jules Lebeau sat writing all day in his study, with his feet wrapped in a plush rug. He knew that he would soon die, and therefore hurried. He wanted to finish one more book. It was a most ordinary love story, simple and sentimental. After forty clever, biting, sarcastic books, knowing that this one would be his last, and that after it there could be nothing but death, Jules Lebeau was searching for particularly gentle and tender words. Perhaps he desired in that way to make his peace with life.

There were many rare and valuable things in his study:

above a Catalan Christ of painted wood, robed in velvet, that writhed from the piercing spear, hung complex, cunning, and wicked pictures by Picasso representing violins, cheek by jowl with the meek faces of Novgorod icons. There were Etruscan vases, Mexican sculptures in lava, Negroes' gourd banjos, Gothic stained glass, Florentine wedding chests, carved Lapland combs, engravings by Piranesi, Japanese dwarf trees, still life studies by Cézanne, a perfectly preserved fragment of Doric frieze, reliefs, and many other objects calculated to drive any museum director to distraction.

On wall-long shelves, in perfect alignment for mental combats, were thousands and thousands of books, from Kama Sutri to Guillaume Apollinaire, from the mumblings of the early fathers to the exclamation marks of Bolshevik pamphlets. In the midst of all these riches sat the wise old man, Jules Lebeau, his feet wrapped in a rug, painfully trying to remember all the sweet and tender words in the world to describe the extraordinary love of two ordinary lovers. Just at the moment, however, he was not searching for those words. Pushing aside the long pages covered with corrections, he warmed his hands at the fire, while he waited for a knock at the door. The day was to see a very rare event: a stranger had been invited to enter the mysterious mansion. The reason was as follows: it was much easier to get eighty thousand francs from the members of the Academy jury than to spend them. Jules Lebeau was tired of buying idols, and he loathed charity. Indeed, generally speaking, he loathed many things. And at the same time there was nothing that he loved. Perhaps that was why there were so many corrections in his new, unfinished book.

In one of his outbursts of hatred some years earlier, he had written his welcome to the Revolution. He did not, however, love the Revolution. He regarded Communists as



coarse and crude. When he listened to their conversation about the equality of the future, his parchment yellow face never lost its sneer, and he began to compose in his head a new book to form the sequel to *The Conclusions of Monsieur Begemotte*. No, Jules Lebeau did not expect any miracles from Communism. But the Communists hated the things that the great writer hated. So that, if he had known how to love, he might have loved the Communists. That was why, when suffering from a particularly virulent attack of his characteristic hatred and disgust, as the result of a newspaper article, he decided to give the prize money to those who at least hated victorious France, the steel syndicate, the chairs of the Academicians, and the sweet Christ. When he casually heard that a Russian Communist had recently called on an old friend of his—a member of the Chamber—Jules Lebeau asked the Deputy to send the young man along to him.

Punctual to the minute, the Communist entered the study. It was Andrew. He was greatly changed. One can hardly say of a man of twenty-five that he has grown, yet Andrew had grown and was more mature. His features were sharper, his movements more abrupt, his mouth bitterer, his eyes harder. Was this because 17 Rue Thiboumery was still only a name to him? Because, although he had been several weeks in Paris, he had so far not dared to fling himself, as a beast flings itself against its hunter, at the headquarters of espionage? He had lain in wait in the street, but Jeanne had never shown herself. He had tried to ring her up, but the telephone had been rudely answered by a snuffling voice.

Jules Lebeau received the Russian with kindness. After a few inquiries as to the proposed nature of his future work, the author took out of his desk a bundle of thin bank notes.

"There, my friend. There are exactly eighty. I wish you every success. I ask for only one thing in exchange: do not

say that you got the money from me. I am not afraid of being bothered about it, but I do not want my behavior to be regarded as the pose of a bored artist."

Andrew thanked the donor. He would tell no one. But things would move now. He was soon going to Toulon.

Jules Lebeau interrupted him: the details were really no concern of his. He preferred to talk to Andrew about other things. A long and complicated discussion began. Jules Lebeau had not yet had time to write his sequel to *The Conclusions of Monsieur Begemoitte*, but he proceeded orally to outline it to Andrew. The trivial would always remain trivial. Did Andrew see those white and black gods? They were made of wood or bone. There were very many of them. But there always would be gods, always. People would never get along without them. That being the case, did it really matter what Andrew called his new god?

Andrew listened attentively; now and then he succumbed in laughter at the aptness of a bitter phrase, but in the main he made no concessions.

"And liberty? And the disparities? And the injustices of love?" cried Jules Lebeau.

"Well, what about it? The mollusk dies—an island is born. I cancel myself of my own accord. Is not that liberty? I am an insignificant party worker, busy with a secret printing press, and Lenin is the leader of the Communist International. But aren't we doing the same thing? I do not grumble. Nor am I envious. Isn't that disparity? And love? Well, so far as love is concerned, I know nothing about it."

Andrew's voice became harsh, almost hostile. Jules Lebeau instinctively moved his chair back a little.

"You cannot understand me. Can a bird understand that a fish dies in the air, or a fish that a bird perishes in water? These have two different worlds. And I? Well, my angry friend, I have both gills and lungs."

At that they separated.

Andrew's steps rang out stubborn and uncompromising in the empty rooms of the old house, and all the gods, black or white, bone or wood, trembled in astonishment. It was long since they had seen a living man. Jules Lebeau must have seemed to them to be a god made of a plush rug and yellow skin.

The sound of the footsteps reached the great writer in his study and slightly perturbed him. Jules Lebeau had never walked like that even in his youth. Only those who are hastening toward a goal can walk like that. Jules Lebeau had never hastened toward anything. He had sardonically smiled his way through life. Moreover, he had read much, and having read much, he recognized the steps as those distinctive of heretics and lovers. Perhaps after all the Russian was right with his lungs. And the gills? Gills were only a hindrance. Suddenly Jules Lebeau felt wretchedly bored and feeble. Why had he invited this fellow? Why had he given money to a foreign and useless cause? He had simply wasted an afternoon, while his book, his favorite book, the book about that extraordinary love, went unwritten. Did that Communist understand what love meant? People of that sort are not made of flesh and blood but of dull metal. They only warm up when they are shooting. Of course, they would win in the end. But to what purpose? They would exchange one prison for another. Man's folly is immortal. They would light a thousand candles and would fire blank cartridges to amuse Academicians. And love? They know nothing of love. But Jules Lebeau knows all about it, all about useless and beautiful love. What though he himself had never loved anyone? He would nevertheless so write about love that even this Communist, who looks like a human machine out of some American Utopia, should weep.

But where was he to find the words for his book? Tired

out, Jules Lebeau stretched himself out on his sofa and covered himself up with his rug. He felt cold and ill at ease. He was old, and life was ebbing from his withered yellow body hour by hour. Ah, those hours! They disappear more rapidly than M. Raymond Ney's francs, and no big safe is capable of hoarding them. He drew up his legs forlornly. He was alone in the enormous study with the black and white gods and their changeless smirks and their stony stares.

Jules Lebeau put his hand inside his waistcoat and found a little comfort in the warmth of his chest. It was human warmth. He had no other. All Paris loved him. No one loved him. Even Mlle Falette was tired of bringing him hot-water bottles. He was alone. He must write that book on love. He must find the words for it.

If he had but known it, there had stood beside him a moment ago a man so completely filled with love that it would only have been necessary to draw him closer to the fire and closer to his old heart to hear tender and beautiful words enough to fill many volumes. Had he but known that that man was at that instant striding along the Rue St. Père, ignoring, though in the very midst of them, the many booksellers' and antiquaries' shops which filled the street, and in whose window Ovid and Dante gave lessons in love, and Florentine panels and Persian miniatures depicted love—that this ordinary brusque man in a ready-made overcoat, in spite of his recent declaration that he knew nothing about love, was repeating over and over again to himself as he strode along the name of a girl! Had he but know these things, he, Jules Lebeau, would have known that his book on love would never be written, whereas this man had already written his with the one short word, "Jeanne"!

## XVI

### *We Have New Wine To-day*

A BUNCH of grapes was drawn in chalk on the window of a little restaurant. An inscription, "We have new wine to-day," explained what it meant. Andrew stared—had he not made a mistake? Paris is full of little restaurants, and they are all so much alike. No, this must be right, Rue Campagne Première, the fourth house from the corner, and with a signboard: "Meeting place of Friends and Coachmen." A good signboard. It not only proved that this was the right place, but it explained why he had come, though the friend whom Andrew was to meet was not a coachman but a chauffeur. That, however, did not matter. Why be pedantic about the jolly old sign? Either a prince or a chimney-sweep might go into the honest establishment, eat a plate of stew à la Toulouse, and drink a mug of new wine.

Andrew ordered a glass. The wine was cloudy and very light. Andrew was in high spirits and in a mood for wine. No, wine had nothing to do with it. Andrew might have written on his own forehead, "We have new wine to-day."

Don't look slyly at him, madame—he might drink water and yet smile like that. He is twenty-five. Do you understand what that means? Nor is that all. He is engaged on a piece of very fine work. "What work?" you ask. You had better not be told, or you might drop your mug and run for the police. You are so afraid of strikes, they leave you without gas or water. But listen, that is not all. This happy



customer is in love. "But in heaven's name, with whom?" You won't be told that either. You have a bad habit of gossiping with the old janitor. Besides, it doesn't matter. You don't know her. Now you understand that your wine is not the point, whatever its quality.

But the new wine, light and delicate, is making the golden sunshine of September play in your glass. How good it smells. It has the scent of the clove, barely touched with the first frost, the first invigorating smell of autumn, of empty fields, and of the creaking loads under the clear, lofty sky. Everyone drinks new wine. You can't get it every day. Madame drinks and merrily treads a measure, forgetting the francs which she has not collected from her customers. "Drink, friends." That notice on the bar is a liar. It says, "Cash to-day, credit to-morrow." Whoever invented that? It ought to read differently: "To-day new wine, and to-morrow——" But there is no to-morrow so long as there is new wine to-day.

Two young lovers drink it, sitting like a pair of birds in the darkest corner. He is not a coachman, he is a locksmith. Generally speaking, there are no coachmen here, except on the signboard. But it is certainly the meeting place of friends. She is a midinette. She makes lovely hats. She does not wear one herself—hats are expensive. At the moment this causes her no regret—a hat would be in the way. It is less easy to kiss in a hat. And these young lovers not only drink new wine, they kiss often and tenderly. And it is not on account of the wine, either—they could kiss just as well in the street under an old umbrella. Only the passers-by in the street make kissing inconvenient.

There is no doubt that the wine is good. The old Auvergnois who sold chestnuts at the door tasted it and cried: "New wine is gay wine." Don't imagine that the Auvergnois are liars—it is the Gascons who lie—the

Auvergnois sell chestnuts. The old man fusses over his brazier, his blackened fingers turning the chestnuts which the heat explodes with loud pops. The Auvergnois laughs: chestnuts are good in Auvergne, wine is good in Touraine, life is good in the wide world. No, the Auvergnois do not lie.

Andrew was the gayest of the lot. Lebeau was a good sort. Things would move now. Andrew must set to work. He was fermenting like the new wine that may burst ironbound barrels. It was a month since he had left Moscow and, to tell the truth, that month had been a very dull one. When he had reached Kovno he had had to die and then come to life again as Casimir Batatitisse, who was on his way to Paris to procure for a dozen Lithuanian ministries a dozen French typewriters apiece, though up to that time they had all been served, I believe, by one Remington found in a girls' school.

Once he had crossed the frontier into France he thought no more about ministers or typewriters, but he rehearsed his new name with commendable assiduity. It was not an easy name, and was difficult to pronounce. Why had Andrew selected France as his destination? In the first place, he knew French perfectly, so that Jeanne had taken him for a Parisian at their first meeting. Secondly, in a replete and victorious France the work seemed particularly difficult and hopeless. There was, of course, a "thirdly," but this "thirdly" Andrew did not like to acknowledge even to himself.

After looking round a little in Paris Andrew decided to tackle the sailors. This was perhaps due to his memory of the mutiny of French sailors on the Black Sea, or perhaps the very word "sailor" encouraged him. A sailor is always a sailor. He never wears a bowler hat, and a good storm is nothing new to him. Toulon might prove to be a splendid Cronstadt.

Lack of funds caused delay. But yesterday had changed everything. The members of the jury had saved the situation. He could now go either to Toulon or to Brest. It remained only to get into touch with certain people. That was why he had come here to meet the chauffeur Pierre Pouatras. He was not like the others. He was a true Communist.

Yes, things were moving, and Andrew was gay. Recalling the discussion of the day before, he felt something like pity for Jules Lebeau. Of course he was a great writer, and *Begemotte* was a fine book. And yet one was somehow sorry for him. Like his gods, he looked at everything with lifeless eyes. Carefully considered, he was a poor, lonely old man. No, Andrew was far the happier of the two. Lebeau had no faith in the Revolution; Lebeau did not love mankind. And, even more, did the great writer know what the dirty Rue Thiboumery was?

Poor Lebeau! Andrew's pity for Lebeau, however, was only an incident between two thoughts, one of his printing press and the other of Toulon, between two sighs for dark Jeanne, between two glasses of new wine. Only the old know how to pity thoroughly, fundamentally. Some day Andrew may learn—forty years hence, perhaps. But to-day? To-day we have new wine.

A new customer entered. "Madame, a glass for him, please." He was wearing corduroy knickerbockers and a goatskin coat with the fur outside. A gay costume, and the man himself was gay. He sipped his wine, frequently glancing at the window. Whom had he left outside, a friend or a dog? Not at all. You see this was the "real Communist," the chauffeur Pierre Pouatras, and at the door stood a large automobile. Pierre put two sous in the slot of the automatic organ, and all the glasses, with or without wine, rang with the roar of the roll: "Marion, beautiful Marion." The noise

may have made Madame's ears ache, but it enabled the two friends to talk at ease. The conversation was short, however.

"Got it."

"Good for you. Well, now we can get them. I shall go with you."

"All right. First Marseilles, and then Brest. But we must report ourselves to the Committee of Instructions."

"That's Thursday."

Business was over. Now they could laugh, could drink another glass of new, sweet wine. Pouatras put more coins in the machine, this time just for fun. A sentimental song was the outcome, a song that was being sung in the smartest bars of Montmartre as well as in the dark, gloomy yards of the Fifteenth Arrondissement. The song told of the joy of dreaming by the side of an auburn-haired girl. Or rather, it told of the sadness of her going away, of the sorrows of sleeping alone. Pouatras became sentimental. Really, this fellow in the goatskin knew how to do everything: he could fire a machine gun, he could cook lentils, run a motorboat, sing love songs about auburn-haired girls, install electric bells, catch lobsters, raise rebellions, be sad, be gay, and love. Who would say that that was not enough for any man? Pouatras was always gay, even when he was sad. He had recently spent four months in the political section of the Santé Prison, and there he had learned to play on a comb, and to darn (previously he had merely sewn up the holes in his socks). He had also sung such merry songs in his cell that even the strongest warders got headaches. He lived alone in an attic. In the daytime he "cranked up" his car; in the evening he went to party meetings and found life pleasant.

At the moment he also found the new wine pleasant. When the organ persistently repeated the passage about the

auburn-haired girl, he became emotional and wiped his eyes with a red silk handkerchief; though a chauffeur's eyes, one would have thought, must be inured to dust and petrol. But there were probably special reasons for this.

Andrew was not listening to the music. He was wondering whether he could possibly go away to Toulon without seeing Jeanne. No, it was impossible. She was somewhere near. She was in Paris, and he could not reach her! Go to the house? But thereby he would not only give himself away, he might ruin her. Her uncle, his detective agency, a Russian Bolshevik. What was he to do? He could not live without her. So dark, so sad, so dear, where are you?

Andrew seized Pouatras's elbow: "I want to ask you a favor. I simply must find an acquaintance of mine here. An 'illegal' can't call, it might implicate her. Perhaps you could keep watch in the car?"

"Of course. You just tell me what she is like."

Well, Andrew did his best. But it was probably not an unprejudiced list of Jeanne's features. It probably bore little resemblance to a police description or to the descriptions of people in the novels of the great Jules Lebeau. He was prudent. He did not say a word too much. Nevertheless, Pouatras again took out his silk handkerchief, although the organ had long stopped playing. When Andrew finished, Pierre said, "So you have a little friend? So have I, my auburn-haired girl."

So that was why the chauffeur had listened so attentively to the organ. Perhaps he did not know how good it was to dream with this girl, but he certainly knew how sad it was to sleep alone.

Andrew was not offended. The term "little friend" did not trouble him as applied to Jeanne, to Jeanne with whom, after he had fallen in love with her, he had only spent an hour in the rain at Orlout. He would not have admitted for



anything in the world to the great writer Lebeau, who knew every word about love, that he, Andrew, loved anybody. But he found it easy to talk of Jeanne to this jolly comrade who had a little friend too, but fair instead of dark.

Pouatras went on: "My girl is a rope dancer."

No, this was not an allegory; Pierre never went so far as allegories. It was the profession of little Lisette, who worked with a traveling show and danced on a rope every evening in one of the twenty arrondissements of Paris.

"Yes, she's a rope dancer, the little rogue. And yours?"

Andrew could not answer. What was Jeanne doing now? Who could tell? For a moment he felt disturbed. He felt a longing to say aloud her almost forbidden name.

"She? Her name is not Lisette. It is Jeanne."

How joyous, how delicious the name sounded!

"Well, to your Jeanne."

Pouatras raised his glass of new wine. Andrew smiled and drank. Yes, he drank to Jeanne in merry new wine. Sorrow did exist, but where was it? Separation? But what terrors does separation hold when there are so many years in the future for whose minutes one has no need to tremble as the hermit of the Rue St. Père trembles?

No, separation does not matter. And so, "To Jeanne." Of course, the new wine will become old. Then its price will go up. Connoisseurs will talk of its bouquet. The milked bottles will become a magnet for epicures and snobs. People will begin to respect this old, expensive wine, safely protected for many years in dark vaults, just as they now respect old Jules Lebeau. This old wine will be drunk at banquets and may often prove to be a sad wine, lying like a stone on the heart of some wily old minister, interrupting the reminiscences of some aging beauty, and bringing tears to poets who have long had nothing but their fame. Perhaps Andrew will become like one of them. Perhaps, drink-

ing a glass of old wine, he will then remember Jeanne and this evening in the little restaurant where the organ played and Madame trod a measure to its rhythm, and remembering it all, will grow sad. Perhaps! But to-day he loves, to-day he is merry, to-day—well, to-day there is new wine. If you don't believe it, ask the Auvergnois—the Auvergnois never lie.

## XVII

### *How They Rushed to Call on Happiness*

THERE are fine days and wet days and dull days. But what can one call a day like this? Before dinner it rained and cleared up again at least ten times. It certainly was a day full of caprice. Women barely had time to shut and open their umbrellas. The pavements dried quickly and became pale gray, even dusty, and then shone again, as though they had been polished with black lead by whole regiments of Italians, who sat at the street corners with their legs tucked up under them in the midst of a veritable battery of different-sized brushes. It is only in February that such days occur, while the issue of the struggle between winter and spring is still in doubt. Short though it is, February may become a long season—a recognized division of the year. Usually, however, it becomes nothing; it just rushes by, a fragment, a sort of misunderstanding. And so this was a real February day. It was equally divided between joy and grief. At eleven o'clock even the disgruntled and rheumatic piano tuner in the Rue Thiboumery smiled as he watched the quick, thin sunbeam which penetrated the dark courtyard. And at half-past eleven the boys, flying kites in the Luxembourg or the Parc Monceau, got wet to the skin and ran home trembling with fear. They had evidently made a mistake, you don't fly kites in winter, you play hide and seek. But was it winter? There was the sun again. So it may be spring? Perhaps.

In the respectable bureau of the Rue Thiboumery, however, it was undoubtedly winter. The most cunning, the

most agile ray of sunshine could not penetrate there. One might really hang up a notice: "Jealous folk, spies, sharpers, and dust are heartily welcome." And the sun? No, the sun is quite another matter, there is no admission for the sun. Just such miserable, invincible winter filled the heart of the little clerk upon whom everyone vented his moods: the director, Rotten-nose, the clients, and even the rusty pens. For up till now she has not been able to escape to far-away Moscow. She must listen to either the reproaches or the greasy playfulness of M. Raymond Ney, file documents, and wait.

Wait? What for? Why, for a miracle, of course. Had it not been a miracle that brought the kind Zaharkevitch to her on that terrible night? Andrew had said, "I will come." And every time the office door opened, Jeanne started. But the new clients stared gloomily at her, interested only in their own suits and intrigues. Andrew never came. Perhaps he had lost her address. Perhaps he had been shot. Well, on one of her wanderings about Paris Jeanne had seen the Seine. If she were only certain that Andrew would not come! There was plenty of calm, dark water in the Seine.

On this February day, when women were so anxiously reaching out their hands—should they open their umbrellas, should they shut their umbrellas?—Jeanne was sitting over a pile of papers. Gabrielle came in: Would Jeanne take her to a shop? Her father had told her to buy two dozen snails. M. Ney rumbled as a valedictory warning: "Only see that they are fat and not over eighteen sous. And you" (this to Jeanne), "when you go with my daughter, see that you don't accost any men. I can see right through you."

The girls went out at a lucky moment, when spring had the upper hand, and Jeanne, feeling the gentle warmth of the sun on her cheek, said: "It feels like his kiss. How good! It is spring."

But no one kissed Jeanne. This—spring? No, spring had

remained at Theodosia. This was not spring. This was merely the Rue Thiboumery. She noticed a large car at the gates. It must belong to some jealous husband who had hurried here impatiently to find out how his wife had deceived him, afraid of learning the truth, afraid yet anxious, now crying to the chauffeur, "Stop," now, "Go back," and again, "Quicker," tapping the glass with his stick to increase the speed.

But for some reason the chauffeur called after Jeanne. She turned round, and he beckoned. Leaving the blind girl, Jeanne ran toward him. Who could be calling her, who but he?

Pierre Pouatras, the merry chauffeur in the goatskin coat, was smiling. "So that's what you're like? Very dark."

"You called me?"

"Yes. That is to say, it's him. He's your friend. He's a good sort. Everything is all right. He will wait for you tomorrow at five in the Luxembourg Gardens, near the Medici fountain."

Ladies, shut your umbrellas. Boys, fly your kites. Don't argue, above all don't argue. It is spring. Had Jeanne been unhappy? Impossible! It had merely seemed so. Papa? He had gone to sleep. Aglaia? A wicked wizard had invented her. Was not the Rue Thiboumery something that she had seen in a cinema? What office? Jeanne had never been there, she had read about it in Dickens, it was not here at all, it was in foggy London. Constantinople was merely a round dot on a school map. Jeanne would go to the Luxembourg Gardens straight from the little Loirette house. The Medici fountain must be beautiful. Jeanne was laughing gayly. In another minute she might begin to clap her hands or hop on one foot. Merry Pouatras joined in with his loud, jolly laugh. How good it is that people can laugh like this. How good it is that the sun can give such warmth.



Pouatras says to Jeanne: "I'll tell you what. This is the first day of spring. I'll snap my fingers at the taxi. You get in with your sister and I'll take you for a drive, a fine drive."

Gabrielle had been forgotten. Bewildered, she was calling to Jeanne: "Consin, where are you? To whom are you talking?"

"To a chauffeur, to a kind chauffeur. He wants to take us for a drive."

"But Father? But the snails?"

The temptation, however, was too strong. Gabrielle had never been in a car. Once she had been in a tram, but that must be quite different. Something warm and soft was caressing her cheek. Only the spring, of course. Gabrielle could not resist. Let her father scold; it did not matter.

"Shall we go?"

The motor purrs, Pouatras laughs, the two girls laugh. The piano tuner presses himself against the wall in fear—a motor car! They are off—faster, faster.

The gay chauffeur turns the wheel and steps on the pedal. He had been tired of standing in the Rue Thiboumery. Beastly street—Pouatras had an old grudge against it. When he was being examined for his driving license this street had let him down. It was the test examination on the names of streets. The examiners were ex-coachmen, and everyone knows that coachmen have no particular liking for chauffeurs. One of the coachmen, the most spiteful and reddest-nosed one, asked: "How would you drive from the Rue Duteau to the slaughter house in the Rue Morillon?"

Pouatras answered: "First along the Rue Duteau, then along the Rue Alliaré, then—then along the Rue Cronstadt."

That's wrong, there's another street on the way, but what is it called? Is it Mou—mou—mou—ry or Ba—ba—ba—ry? So he muttered something unintelligible. The coach-

man's nose grew redder with irritation. "He won't do. Come again in a fortnight."

Beastly street! And he had stood there three hours that morning, waiting for Jeanne. Away from it quickly, away!

Let the car hum, let the horn blow, make way for us, make way!

At a sharp turn Gabrielle screams. No, she is not frightened; it is simply because she has never ridden in a car before. It's not a bit alarming, it's great fun. The wind runs toward them, plays with their hair and blows in their ears, the silly thing. Faster. Faster. It seems as though they had driven hundreds of miles. This is not Paris. This is the sea. It is moving and makes a noise.

No, it is the sound of the gay boulevards, the sound of their merry laughter, for they laugh as Pouatras, as Jeanne laughs. The multicolored anemones laugh in the flower girls' wicker baskets. The white apron of the waiter with the tray laughs. The sun on the tray laughs. The ruby grenadine in the glasses laughs. In the shop windows the heaps of ribbons laugh. Paris, dear Paris, how beautiful you are!

Here is the Seine. No, its waters are not there to drown in. You can sail along the Seine to, say, Medon, and there the cherries will soon be in bloom. And kiss one another all the way. But the Medici fountain must be still better. To-morrow at five. There still remain twenty-seven hours. If one could but speed up the time. Lazy hands, hurry round the dial! Hasten as we are hastening!

Jeanne presses her feet against the footboard. The rapid motion throws her back. She feels as though her feet were pushing the car along. She feels, too, that the quicker they go the sooner she will reach the Medici fountain. To-morrow at five. Faster! The merry Pouatras steps on the accelerator. And the car goes faster and faster. Pouatras is glad to be driving his comrade's little friend. She is dark. It would be

nice to drive Lisette, the fair, capricious little dancer. To drive with her alone. She, too, had never ridden in an automobile. She rode, slept, and lived in an old yellow caravan, drawn by two old hacks. Horses are afraid of automobiles. But Lisette was not afraid of Pierre. Indeed, as a matter of fact, Pierre was a little bit in awe of Lisette. Supposing she should pout to-day, refuse to kiss him, and begin to flirt with the ringmaster? The ringmaster would crack his whip and cry, "*Allez!*" Impossible. To-day is spring, to-day is luck, to-day, in the dark caravan, to the music of the roundabout, Pouatras would get all Lisette had. And she had much: heart, lips, eyes, cheeks, hair—her dear auburn hair—neck, shoulders—— But better not count any more. Otherwise one might run over somebody.

Hurry, automobile!

The indicator jumps: 18, 20. Pouatras laughs.

Suddenly Gabrielle says to Jeanne: "He is so severe with me, my Russian. I am afraid of making him angry. He is often angry. I can tell by the way he breathes. It is all my fault. I am very bad. But I should be glad if he hit me."

What is that? Jeanne starts. That is not the Medici fountain. Gabrielle seems to be talking about something sad. It begins to rain. Pouatras covers himself with a tarpaulin. Jeanne becomes sad. But it is not serious. It will pass in a moment. It is only a short February sadness, lasting ten minutes till the sun reappears. She is thinking: Gabrielle can love. She does not need happiness. She is like a saint, whereas Jeanne is merely a girl. Jeanne likes sweets, Jeanne likes the pretty frocks displayed in the shop windows. When she saw *Adrienne Lecouvreur* at the theater, she had quietly wept. She wants happiness. She wants Andrew to kiss her. Perhaps hers is a poor sort of love. But she can't love any other way. To-morrow at five. Perhaps it is not so bad after all. Andrew has come. He loves her, he will take her to Russia. And

Jeanne smiles again. And again the sun shoots along the dark blue asphalt.

But of course this sadness is not real sadness. It is raining, that's all. Jeanne has suffered too much to grieve now that there are only twenty-six hours before the fountain. Chauffeur, dear chauffeur, quicker!

The needle dances. They are going so fast that they can go no faster without risking the police station. Gabrielle cannot see the needle, nor can she see the houses rushing toward them. But she can feel the wind. The wind is sharp and noisy. The blind girl whispers to Jeanne, "Cousin, I feel as though we were hurrying somewhere. There is nowhere for us to hurry to. We ought to have gone to the shop, but that was in our street. And we are rushing along as though we had a call to pay. On whom are we going to call?"

On happiness.

Jeanne laughs. And Pouatras laughs. To-night Lisette will let him into the old caravan. Yes, he is rushing straight to happiness. Automobile, dear automobile, hurry! Let M. Ney's fat quiver with indignation, he will get no snails to-day. He will roar like a zoological garden. Never mind. Pouatras has lost a whole day. He will have to pay his loss, a fine. Never mind. It will be dark and warm in the caravan. The pedal, the wheel, the horn! Man in the top hat, get out of the way! We are rushing along. We are rushing to call on happiness.

## XVIII

### *What the Luxembourg Garden Talked About*

THEY were silent. It would have been useless to recollect all the languages of the world, to ransack the thickest dictionaries in the world, from Larousse to Dahl. Such words simply do not exist. No words could express the joy of this minute, quite an ordinary minute, according to the hands of the big clock on the Luxembourg Palace which pointed to four minutes past five—nothing but silence. This time it was born neither of Jeanne's interdict nor of Andrew's fear. No, the Luxembourg Garden did not recall Orlout. This blessed, vibrant silence was filled not only with all the words of many-volumed dictionaries, but with all the sounds which one does not hear: the rhythm of water, the pulsation of the heart, the slipping of sand, perhaps even with the magic which so arranges the growth of the grass that its blades pierce the earth as lovers appear. If one could always be silent in this way, men would certainly have long ago burned up Larousse and Dahl.

Andrew and Jeanne could be silent in this way; others spoke for them. Those chestnut trees, for example, those impatient chestnut trees whose buds were swelling with excitement. The other trees were in no hurry. The ash would come out in April, the plane tree in May, and the lime, the lazy lime, not till June. But the chestnut never has any time to waste. Schoolboys will play games in the recess between two classes under the lime trees in June. But what is to become of the lovers in March? And there are so many



lovers in March. So the old chestnuts hasten to deck themselves with white candles. Neither Andrew nor Jeanne could distinguish the various kinds of trees, especially when they were leafless, but the trees under which they met were actually chestnuts, and the chestnuts spoke for them.

The blackbirds, the jaunty blackbirds in their stylish coats spoke for them. Rome has its dark, mythological swallows; in the Prechistinsky Boulevard in Moscow sparrows quarrel with vivacity; but in the Luxembourg Garden the blackbirds whistle satirically as they hop about. But on this day their whistle did not convey satire or censure—no, they whistled in kindliness.

In the pond, among the brown-red leaves of last year, the goldfish circled in complicated pirouettes. Yes, strange as it may seem, even the fish, so famous for their taciturnity, beating the water with their tails, spoke for them.

The burgeoning spring and the old Luxembourg Garden, with all its plant and animal life, spoke for them.

There was a young man strolling along one of the paths near them. His pipe had long since gone out. He had every reason to feel pleased, for his elegy had appeared the day before in a Toulouse newspaper devoted to sports and fashions. But at the moment he was not pleased; at the moment he was much absorbed: he was composing another elegy, and he simply could not find the requisite assonance. He could think of nothing but rhymes and, as a poet, he knew that rhymes were out of date. He ran into one of the benches. His lips moved incessantly. The theme of his new elegy was not yet clear to himself, but it was, without a doubt, the story of Andrew and Jeanne. No one in the Luxembourg Garden could talk about anything else at that moment.

Little girls were playing at La Grace near the marble statue of Georges Sand. They twittered gayly, but not because the wicker-bound hoops were caught on the sticks. It

was because of the abundance of childish fun in the hearts of the two grown-up children, who were not playing at La Grace, that the little girls twittered. But Jeanne and Andrew were silent. A schoolboy stopped in front of the orange tree that stands in a tub to the left of the palace. All the pupils of the Lycée St. Louis know that if you walk three times around this tree the mathematics master will give you good marks. But the pupil walked round it this time disinterestedly: he was going home, there were no masters at home. Were not the two lovers sitting under the chestnut superstitiously guarding their belated happiness?

Needless to say, the bearded Verlaine, on whose bald head blackbirds were perching, recited without intermission his tenderest, his most moving verses. Poor ne'er-do-well Verlaine. He began to speak for them fifty years ago.

The only exceptions were the old Senators who, unable to endure the length of the sessions, were yawning by the windows. They were irritated by the very sight of the blackbirds, the hoops, the lovers, and the spring. It is true that there was nothing in all these things to infringe the laws which they passed; but, nevertheless, the spring, the lovers, and even the blackbirds made them think of something unpleasant, perhaps of funerals. But who took any notice of them? Among the animals of the Garden was an old badger, and the badger is a morose beast. All the rest of the big Garden's inhabitants, including the grass and the trees, rejoiced; nor did they merely rejoice: they rejoiced for Jeanne and Andrew.

They themselves were silent. Love was an implacable censor; it forbade all words. Andrew took Jeanne's hands and did not release them. Dear, dark hands. He would never again release them. Andrew, foolhardy, changeable Andrew, was now firm and decided. Andrew had earned love. Jeanne was no chance prize, not a mere lucky card. Their

separation had made two deep furrows near the once so careless lips. He loved her now wildly and simply, as a costly trophy. Andrew would never release those hands. Never.

They do not ask to be released. Where are all Jeanne's doubts? Perhaps she has grown foolish. She thinks of nothing. She no longer tries to be clever or noble. She simply loves. It is as though she had doffed the tragic cothurnus, and in their place had once more donned the clumsy sabots of Loirette girls. She asks no questions about Aglaia. Were Aglaia to die of grief at this moment, Jeanne would not take her hand away from Andrew's. She is no longer pre-occupied with thoughts as to whether she can be a fit companion for Andrew, whether she can help him with the Revolution. She loves the Revolution now, she loves Russia. But what she ought to do she does not know. Andrew will tell her. In Andrew's hands are not only her hands, but her whole life. How simple! No, Jeanne has not grown stupid, she has simply grown up. She has outgrown that other sorrow of Orlout. That sorrow was the sorrow of growth. If new sorrows come, real, inevitable, Jeanne will accept them. She will prove that one can be heroic in sabots, that there is no need to stand on tiptoe, because sorrow itself uplifts. For the moment she is full of joy, and her joy is quiet, pure, clear.

The silence bursts at last, like the bursting of a shell full of whistling shrapnel. It seems as though the whole Luxembourg Garden is flooded with words. There are no long phrases: they breathe too quickly, and the frequent interruptions of the censor turn their discourse into a mass of disjointed exclamations, endearing terms, even reasonable words. The words race as though steeplechasing, trying to beat each other, if only by a syllable. Every other minute they turn silent, aware that they have not mentioned the

most important things. Then their hands complete what their lips cannot say: There are no words of love; they cannot speak of love. It would sound as though they had suddenly admitted, "You know, I breathe air." Nevertheless, no matter what they say, it is nothing but love. When Jeanne tells him about the Greek woman in Constantinople, Andrew understands, "I was dying there for lack of you." And Jeanne, listening to his account of sleepy Kovno, thinks gladly, "He feels just the same as I do." There is one dangerous moment when Andrew asks what sort of life she is living. The Luxembourg Garden, perturbed, pricks up its ears. Even the blackbirds are silent, and the water prepares to weep. Can it be possible that the tale of the ill-smelling bureau is to be told here? No, Jeanne will not tell it; she intends to keep her first taste of happiness inviolate. Her words will only torture Andrew. He has enough to bear already. She will keep silent. She will tell him some other time, not now. Her calm reply to Andrew's inquiry is, "All right. But I shall have to move. There is no room for me." And that is all.

After that they began to discuss the future. In a few days Andrew would get some money. At present he had none of his own, only party funds. Then Jeanne could take a room. It would be nice to have an attic with a window looking out to heaven. There would be stars in the room then. She wanted to read, to read a lot. She must know how to work with Andrew. Andrew would come to her. Beyond that there was not a word spoken. Only that: he would come. But they both knew that the stars would be in the room. Andrew would go to Toulon for a month or two. And in the summer? In the summer, to Moscow.

Then they laughed. The little girls who had been playing at La Grace had left the garden. Andrew admitted that he was no longer Andrew but somebody quite different. Re-

cently he had been Batatitisse, word of honor, Casimir. Now he was a student from Riga, Nicholas Cislav. He really had luck with his surnames. Andrew even showed her his passport, a chic passport boasting a score of visas that made it look like a general's chest covered with decorations. A card fell out of his pocketbook. It was a photograph torn from the now destroyed document of the celebrated Batatitisse. It had been taken at Kovno, and included everything—not only the face, not only the familiar smile, but love also. The photograph did not return to the pocketbook; imperceptibly, it passed into Jeanne's bag.

They had left their bench and were walking along an obscure path—the path behind the bearded Verlaine, near the Rue Assa. It was getting dark. Somewhere a bell was grumbling and the keeper's voice cried, "Closing time, closing time." They had to say good-bye. But their lips were not satisfied, they were excited, they did not want to separate.

Andrew and Jeanne stopped. Around them everything was quiet and empty. The gay blackbirds had long since gone to sleep. Then Andrew kissed Jeanne. Judged even by the rapid second hand, the kiss did not last long. To Jeanne it seemed to last a lifetime. She looked up in surprise: Must she go back to ordinary life? They did not smile. Their faces were stern. Only one thing was possible after such a moment: to separate, to run to opposite ends of the dark alley. And as this did not happen, their lips once more found each other.

There in the empty path, under the first stars, they kissed. They separated as silently as they had met, but in a moment they returned to each other. They were near the gate by now. The keeper angrily jingled his keys. They wanted to tell each other the most important thing of all—not that the Greek woman had a funny mus-



tache, not that it is easy to find rooms at Toulon. No, something quite different—for instance, that men breathe air. They met once more for a minute to speak of their love.

Where at that moment was the great writer, Jules Lebeau? If he had been hidden behind the keeper's shelter he would certainly have heard all those words which he needed to finish his book. But Jules Lebeau was sitting in his study. It is a long way from the Rue St. Père to the Rue Assa.

No one was near them but the old keeper, and he heard nothing. The keys jangled noisily, and those two spoke very softly. It did not surprise the keeper. He was used to the whispering of lovers when they said good-bye at the gates. They had just time to tell their love; they whispered two great, moving, extraordinary words.

"Andrew!"

"Jeanne!"

Maybe it was not they who said it after all, but the Luxembourg Garden that said it for them.

## XIX

### *The Girl of the Gaverni Bar*

THE Negro Sulo stuck two fingers in his enormous bright-red mouth and whistled. He was trying to whistle particularly loud this evening; he had been promised a double portion of gin. Whistling made his stomach ache. It was a terrible whistle. It would probably have frightened the jackals that lived where Sulo came from. But those who patronized the Gaverni Bar enjoyed it. They had long ago tired not only of violins and flutes, but of the crash of jazz bands. Only the Negro Sulo could tickle their jaded ears. Sometimes the whistling was provocative, sometimes languorously lecherous. It made the air thick, viscid, sultry. And the contemporary Daphnises, revolving in their dinner jackets to the sound of this hundred-horse-power nightingale, could make love to their hired Chloes with an air that was at the same time impetuous and theatrical.

No sooner did the awakening drum call to them, no sooner did Sulo put his fingers to his mouth, than they were on their feet and, seizing their ladies, began to dance. As a matter of fact, they did not dance, they simply walked about the narrow barroom, pressing to their chests the fat breasts of the Chloes. When Sulo suddenly changed his sharp, invoking whistle to a languorous wheeze, they stopped and tried to rub themselves against each other in rhythm, and then they hastened off again. Their faces wore the expression of young bloods indifferent to all things. For they were Europeans, and were thoroughly aware that

this was only a dance, a one-step, an aperitive preliminary to love; the real love would take place a couple of hours later, not on the sofas of the bar, but on soft, freshly made beds in appropriate apartments. Yes, notwithstanding Jeanne's interdict, all the customers of this and of many other bars would give the name of love to their nocturnal occupation. Indeed, in the daytime, when the Chloes had washed off their paint and had become simple Louises and Antoinettes, and were chatting with one another about professional matters, they would say, "Of course, I charge a lot; but then I know how to love."

They were right in their way. That is the best of words, you can make them mean so many different things. It was not only Louise and Antoinette, doing solo turns, who liked to explain that their charges were high because they knew how to love, but the tiny Margot who had also a more prosaic source of livelihood. Men who went to the Gaverni with women usually sat down at a table at once and ordered champagne. If they preferred liqueurs or other wine, the waiter would contemptuously explain that the Gaverni was not the Victoria, where you might even drink rum. There was no Sulo at the Victoria, it was not frequented by stylish young bloods, but by coarse pimps; there were pretty scenes on the sofas there sometimes. As for the Gaverni, that was a rendezvous for first-class people. Alarmed by a speech of this kind, patrons obediently selected the most expensive champagne. Solitary visitors, however, might penetrate the depths of the room to the bar itself, and there, perched on high stools, drink liqueurs, or if they were real men of the world, order various concoctions such as cobbles, cocktails, or flips. In the center sat the tiny Margot with deep, shameless eyes and the golden curls of a Botticelli cherub. Margot's business was to look after the interests of the bar's owner.

When the patron ordered a sherry cobbler, Margot would sweetly ask, "Two?" Margot wanted a sherry cobbler, and who could say, "No," to this curly cherub? Thus she sometimes had to take as many as twenty doses of various poisons in one night. She did not acquire the art at once. In the beginning there were broken glasses and enforced periods of absence. But now she could vie with a Dutch boatswain whose feeding bottle had been filled with whisky instead of milk. She had forgotten what it felt like to be drunk. Margot was proud of this accomplishment, of knowing how to drink. Besides, as has already been mentioned, Margot knew how to love: that is to say, a kiss left her as cold as a cocktail. Thanks to these things, she never forgot herself and did exactly as her clients wished.

Five years before, the kisses of a shop boy at Nancy had made her forget everything on earth. In the intervening five years, Margot had been kissed so often that it was a wonder her lips had not been worn down like St. Peter's foot in the cathedral of Rome.

Hardened though she was, however, three things still affected Margot: bawdy anecdotes, sentimental films, and cocaine. She knew by experience far more than is told in the most debauched stories of the world, but she brightened perceptibly when she heard some fantastic tale of sadism or necromancy. At such times her blue eyes, grown rounder, would light with a dull gleam.

She went to the cinema alone, because she found that attendant swains always tried to make the most of the darkness, and that prevented her from concentrating. When the screen showed a drunken husband bullying his wife, who uncomplainingly washed the babies' clothes, or when a wicked father dragged his daughter round the room by her hair because she loved a poor but noble student, Margot

would begin to cry like a baby, loudly, openly, and she would continue to sob and blow her nose during the interlude.

As for cocaine, that took the place of kisses and wine. She had only to sniff a pinch of the magic powder up her small, capriciously upturned nose in order to feel that she was the wife of the American millionaire Ford, about whom she had one day read in a torn newspaper. Koko (that was the name by which cocaine went at the Gaverni) was the only love of this girl, who spent every evening sitting at the bar.

On this evening when Sulo, tempted by the prospect of gin, was whistling with peculiar frenzy, Margot was bored. Not one of the high stools was occupied. It was well after midnight when the first customer appeared. Margot had no desire to look at people. She was only interested in them on the films. Therefore she did not so much as glance at the tall, stout newcomer. But when he asked for a bottle of Moët, Margot thought to herself: he must be a foreigner; only a foreigner would dream of drinking champagne standing at a bar.

Margot became more attentive. Her voice took on vibrations of tenderness. She drank and laughed. Somewhat unexpectedly the champagne was followed by brandy. Margot was unperturbed. Then two glasses of thick egg flip appeared. The guest began to get fuddled. Then Margot drew her stool nearer to his and crossed her legs.

On seeing her strong, slender calf encased in a transparent silk stocking, the man began to fidget. Observing this, Margot went further. She asked the guest if he would not like to dance a one-step with her. The Negro Sulo was snorting and whistling. Couples were walking rapidly to and fro. Margot knew how to do that very gracefully. But



she had not hit on a very good partner. He would either hug Margot tightly or let her slip away from him. He jostled other couples or trod on their feet. The girl hated his hands more than anything. Horrid hands, they went up and down her back, dug into her flesh, squeezed her, squeezed her so tight that she felt faint. Horrid hands. Sulo had finished whistling. The dancers had decorously returned to their tables. But the tall gentleman who drank champagne standing at the bar breathed heavily, swaying from foot to foot, and would not let Margot go.

Eccentric scenes were not in Margot's line. They became the center of observation. It made her feel uncomfortable. Irritated, she said to her companion: "Let go of me. If you like, we can go somewhere else."

"Yes, yes, right away."

He was drunk, absolutely drunk.

"I lost two hundred francs in the street to-day." That was the tactful manner in which Margot usually named her price.

"All right, be quick."

It was nearly morning when a married couple who had lost their last train arrived at what seemed a perfectly respectable hotel. The man was no longer capable of understanding anything. Even the experience which Margot had gained in five years was lost on him. He tore her silk underclothes with his unutterable hands. Margot was furious. From time to time she took a good pinch of cocaine to prevent herself from going utterly to pieces. Margot had seen a film in which a girl strangled a brute with a big nose. She felt as though she could strangle this man. Never had she taken so much cocaine. The drunken fellow became flabby and began an endless babble.

"You're a duck. I'll give you an extra hundred. I like to live and let live. I know a girl here—some girl, I can tell

you. I'd give her a thousand. I'd give her a million if I had it. But I'll get her. I'll break her in. I'll go for her so that she'll suffocate."

"Is she from the Gaverni or some other bar?" asked Margot. She didn't care, she asked only to keep the conversation going.

"No, my dear, this is quite another story. She's dark. Generally speaking, I don't care for blondes. Don't be offended, I adore you. Shall we sleep together again tomorrow? But there are blondes who are too disgusting for words."

"You are wrong, lovey. Our Louise is very fair, and men find her most attractive. One American officer even wanted to marry her."

"Marry? Your American is a fool. I have to get married, and the very thought of her makes me sick. I'm an unhappy man. I've got no luck. I expect that American had a whole pile of dollars. It's better to kill than to get married. When I think of having to stay alone with her, it gives me the shudders."

His voice trembled. Was his lot so hard after all? Or had that egg flip been too poisonously strong? Anyhow, the client began to feel very sorry for himself. And although she found him pretty hateful, although he had torn her new undies, although he had horrid hands—Margot felt sorry for him.

"Poor dear, whom are you obliged to marry? An old American?"

"Worse. You'd never guess. She's blind."

Margot was so astonished that she sat up. The hotel room vanished. She felt as though she were in a cinema. What an interesting picture!

"She's not at all old, and it can't be denied that she's beautiful. But blind! think of it! And she didn't become

blind. She was born so. When she begins to chatter, it's as if she did it on purpose to frighten you. I'm no coward. I shot a Bolshevik dead in Russia. But I'm afraid of her."

"You say—blind and beautiful? That's most astounding. Where is she?" It seemed to Margot that such things could only happen in California or Algiers.

"Here, in the Rue Thiboumery. Her father has a detective agency and a jolly good business it is, my dear. A solid concern. I'm not going to sell myself cheap. I can smell a million there."

The client had stopped whining. His voice sounded vigorous and cheerful. But Margot had no interest in the monetary details. She was absorbed in the mysterious heroine. "My angel, do tell me more about her. Is she really beautiful?"

"A picture. If you didn't know she was blind, you might go mad over her. But I prefer brunettes. Seville. Spanish passion. Her beauty can't be denied. But what good is it if she's blind?"

"She must be very unhappy."

"I should think so. Did you expect her to be happy? Why, anyone could kick her in the face like a scurvy puppy."

This comparison seemed to please the client. He burst into a resounding laugh. But Margot grew more and more upset. This was a really heartrending film. She had already begun to blow her nose in a suggestive manner. She was obliged to have recourse to Koko again in order to avoid bursting into tears. But even the magic powder did not cheer her this time.

The client went on. He grew so excited that he jumped on the bed and began to gesticulate like an actor. He was terrifying with his long apelike hands, and his hairy chest and pale pink drawers. He seemed to Margot the real

villain of the films, the kind who beats his wife, strangles rich old women, and lures deluded maidens into caves.

"I'll twist her, I'll crush her, wretched creature, I'll strangle her the first night. She won't dare make a sound. It's only for the moment that I have to play the lover. I say 'darling' to her and put out my tongue at her. Look, like this. Honest. She can't see a damned thing. I kiss her; it's like kissing a corpse. My lips crack with horror at it. But that's only now. Let her try to touch me after we're married. I'll shut her up in a cupboard. I'll get rid of her in three days. I'll throw her down a sewer like a blind pup."

The guest was getting steadily drunker with the heat. He no longer talked. He yelled. He demonstrated with his long hands how he would strangle, crush, and grind to powder his unhappy bride. Margot hunched herself up in a corner.

"And she's madly in love with me. Kneels before me. Word of honor. Licks my hands. I take the place of God for her. It's nauseating. Even here it makes me sick. That egg flip was bad. Once I've wrung the father, I'll settle the girl."

Margot was weeping loudly, desperately, weeping as she had never wept before, even when she saw *The Broken Lily* on the screen.

"Don't be frightened; I'm not talking about you. You and I will sleep together again."

"I'm—I'm sorry for her. You're not making all this up? Perhaps you're telling stories to frighten me? You just saw this at the cinema."

"Making it up? Fool! No one could make up such a thing. It would never enter anyone's head. Go and have a look at her, your own hair will stand on end. Just go to the bureau in the Rue Thiboumery. It's No. 17. Then you'll realize what horrors there are in the world. The blind

witch! She's worn me to shreds. I've lost my appetite. I've not been to a woman for three weeks. Now, my pet, kiss me. Or do you know what? Let's go to sleep. I feel sick. It was a poisonous thing, that flip. Let's sleep. Shall we?" He did not even wait for an answer. Without drawing the clothes over him, he lay down and fell asleep. A moment later there was a loud snore.

But Margot felt no inclination for sleep. She had heard an awful story. She had taken too much cocaine. She wanted to run, to fly, to weep, to rescue, to face fearful dangers, to be a film heroine. She dressed hurriedly. She did not know what to do. After a cinema she could powder her tear-stained face and go to the Gaverni. But she could not go home now. The guest was asleep. The bushy black hair rose and fell on his naked breast, his arms were flung wide. A regular villain. Margot had felt it at the Gaverni when she danced the one-step with him. Smother him? Save the girl? Margot went close up to him and touched his thick perspiring neck. But that frightened her so that she gave a little scream. The guest did not stir. No, Margot was a coward, she didn't dare kill him. The only thing to do was to run away from here. She went to the door. Then, remembering something, she went to the chair on which the guest's coat lay. She took two hundred francs, and then, after a moment's hesitation, she added another hundred. On a card that she found in his pocketbook she wrote with her eyebrow pencil, "I have taken the two hundred I lost in the street and the hundred you promised me. You are a real villain. The girl from the Gaverni Bar."

After that she ran quickly out of the hotel. It was already nine o'clock. Her eyes were shining. She ran into people at every step who swore at her angrily. She made her way with difficulty. She was in a terrible hurry. She did not know where she was going, but she was, never-



theless, afraid of being late. When she reached the Place de l' Opéra she looked at the crowded boulevards in bewilderment. Then, taking one more pinch of Koko, without further thought she sprang into a bus labeled, "Place Clichy. Gare de Montparnasse."

## XX

### *This Is Not One of Perrault's Fairy Stories, It Is Not a Film—It Is Simply Life*

GABRIELLE's needles were moving quickly: she was knitting a scarf for her bridegroom. How she envied every bit of the wool! For the wool would caress her lovely prince's neck. And Gabrielle could not do that; she was so seldom alone with him. Would he come to-day as he had promised?

Rotten-nose's voice, which sounded as though he always had a cold, was heard from behind the door:

"Mademoiselle Gabrielle, someone to see you."

Oh? So early? He never came in the morning. He must have had an intuition that Gabrielle was waiting for him. But no, instead of his decisive tramp came the light, sharp click of high heels, the rustle of silk, a whole chorus of extraordinary acute and penetrating sounds.

"Who is there?"

There was no reply. All sound seemed to have ceased. It was very quiet. Gabrielle, in bewilderment, tried to explore the room with her ears. At last she stretched her hand toward the door and asked again, "Who are you?"

At the door stood the heroine of the finest film in the world, the girl from the Gaverni Bar, the reckless Margot who was a cocaine addict. She was silent. Gabrielle's hand seemed to pierce her. She tried to speak but could not.

While she was hurrying along the Rue Thiboumery her head had been full of such beautiful and convincing words.

She had even prepared the opening sentences of what she would say: "Poor, blind girl, you are betrayed. I come to save your unhappy heart." She had pictured herself as arriving at the last moment. The lawyer had handed a pen to the bride that she might sign the marriage contract. No, that was wrong; the blind do not write. They would simply ask her, "Do you consent?" That villain would be standing at her side, his sleeve rolled up in readiness to crush her childish neck with his apelike hands. Margot would be just in time; she would reveal the whole treacherous plot. Everyone would be happy. They would say, "Stay here and live with us." But Margot, in the rôle of mysterious heroine, would not even give her name. She would return to the bar and only cry a little in the night. It would be beautiful.

That was what Margot had thought as she had hurried along the Rue Thiboumery. But now she was speechless. Now she could find no words. She must have lost them coming up those dark stairs.

"Who are you? You must have made some mistake. The office is through there. I am Gabrielle. This is where I live."

Margot must speak. But, disconcerted, she whispered something quite simple instead of the grandiloquent speech she had prepared: "I? I am the girl from the Gaverni Bar."

"Bar? What is a bar?"

That was too much for Margot. She felt far from gay. Indeed, she felt frightened. The bureau, the typewriters, the young girl peacefully knitting a scarf—all this put her out of countenance. But she could not help laughing. What the blind girl had said was too funny. Margot could understand that there might be people who did not know what a steamer or an earthquake was (she herself knew about both), but not to have heard of a bar—that was really funny. Margot laughed aloud.

"A bar? You've never heard of a bar? It's where—well, I

don't know how to describe it. It's jolly; they drink champagne or cocktails, and dance. And Sulo, the Negro, whistles."

"I could not bear that. Negroes terrify me."

"There's nothing terrifying about Sulo. He's got a tongue like a cat's, long and rough. He's awfully fond of sweets. I sit at the bar and——"

Suddenly remembering why she had come, Margot interrupted her enthusiastic description. With a desperate effort she cried, "You don't know. He's a villain, he's a regular villain."

"Who? The Negro?"

"No, your bridegroom."

"That's not true. He is good. Don't you dare insult him."

Gabrielle rose and stretched out her hands, holding the knitting needles. She was ready to defend her love.

"Listen to me. He's deceiving you. When I slept with him last night——"

"You slept with him? Are you his sister?"

Margot burst out laughing again.

"You are queer! You're a baby; you don't know anything. To sleep means to love. Do you understand? I only spend the evening in the bar; at night it's my business to love. The men pay well when I please them. That's how I make my living; that's my work. Last night your young man took me."

"That's a lie. He can't love you. He told me that he loved no one but me."

Margot lost her temper. Instead of thanks she was getting blame.

"What exactly do you mean by 'That's a lie'? He was too impatient to wait till I undressed. He tried to begin kissing in the bar."

At these words, Gabrielle went up to Margot, and took her hand. She said very softly: "Don't laugh at me. The boys in the flat above laugh at me because I am blind. Please tell me, did he kiss you?"

"Of course he did. I earned my three hundred francs honestly."

Gabrielle began to cry. Tears of that kind were beyond Margot. She liked crying herself, but she liked a thorough, good, noisy cry. And the blind girl made no sound. Her shoulders did not heave. Tears, many tears, streamed down her calm face. As she did not understand that sort of crying, Margot did not know how to comfort the blind girl. At last Gabrielle said: "It's not his fault. It's I who am to blame. I envy you. You must be better than I am. You are not blind. Let him love you; let him kiss you. I won't say a word to him. But perhaps he will still want me to be his wife; to wash his floors. If he does, I shall be happy."

"Be quiet. You don't understand a thing. You must not consent. He told me that he would strangle you directly after the wedding. His hands are like an ape's. I'll tell you why I rushed here. I must rescue you. He will shut you up in a closet. He is capable of anything."

"You say terrible things. Why should he shut me up? Have I done him any harm?"

"He hates you. You should have heard him shouting, 'I'll strangle her, I'll strangle her.' He says he puts his tongue out at you while he's making love. He says you are worse than the old Englishwoman."

"I don't understand a word. I'm stupid. Don't laugh at me. Why does he tell me that he loves me? Why?"

"How slow you are! Don't I tell men that I love them when I want to spit in their faces? They pay for it."

"You tell lies, then. That's wrong."



"Don't put on airs, my dear. Everybody has to lie sometimes. But I never kill anybody. Whereas he wants to take your *dot* and then strangle you. He ought to be put in prison. He ought to have his head cut off."

"He told you he hated me?"

"Yes, again and again. He did not merely say it; he bellowed it like a bull."

Gabrielle raised her hands to her streaming eyes.

"Have pity on me, I am so unhappy. Mine—are not like those of others."

The heroine of the most attractive of films lost her self-control at that. Throwing her arms round Gabrielle, she began to sob. Ah, her tears were not silent. It seemed to her that her fit of weeping would be too much for her; that she would die on the spot. Of course, it was not the sort of way to behave in a strange house. But what else could she do? Gabrielle had asked for pity, and Margot knew no other way in which to show it.

The unaccustomed sounds from his daughter's room reached M. Ney. He decided to investigate. He found Gabrielle with some unknown girl. They were both standing in the middle of the room, crying.

"What's happened? I thought your future husband was with you."

"He is not my future husband. He shall never come here again."

"Have you gone mad? Who is this person?"

"She is a good girl. She is from a bar. She slept with him. He loves her. He confessed everything to her."

"A bar? And this prostitute dares to come into a respectable home? I'll kill her."

Ah, that fat which made up M. Ney's face could be terrible. He was like a butcher preparing to cut up a sheep.

Margot was no longer crying. She was moving round the room like one possessed, looking for some way of escape.

"I've done nothing wrong. I only wanted to save your daughter. Let me go. There's no need to kill me. I'll go away myself."

But M. Ney was not to be mollified so easily.

"I'll teach you to slander honest folk, you dirty little prostitute. Gaston! Alfred! Victor!"

The master's call was answered by Rotten-nose and two young detectives in tweed caps, with their faces made up.

"Take her and throw her out."

Gabrielle tried to shield Margot with her body, but her father caught hold of her.

"Father, don't touch her; she is good."

"Shut up, you fool. Don't move."

Twisting Margot's arms, the young detectives dragged her through the long labyrinth of the bureau. Gaston followed with kicks to expedite her progress. Margot screamed. But that of course did not help her. Her hat caught in a doorway and fell off. At last, with a husky snigger, Gaston gave the word: "And now a good strong one and down!"

The young detectives gave Margot a push, and she rolled down the narrow stairs.

M. Ney continued to rumble.

"How dared you talk to her? When M. Halibieff comes you keep your mouth shut, do you hear? Not a word."

"Father, I can't; he loves her."

"You're an idiot. All young men amuse themselves."

"He makes fun of me."

"Well, what about it? You're blind, aren't you? I dare say I should make fun of you if I weren't your father. You should thank God that he consents to marry you."

"Father, have pity on me; I'm afraid of him."

"Be silent. What I say goes. Not another word. When he comes, you're to smile, do you hear? To smile, you blind sheep!"

Gabrielle was alone. Halibieff had not yet arrived. So she need not smile now. She might cry, because she cried silently so no one would hear her. She wept because her good prince had turned out to be a villain, and all that remained of love, of the sea, and the roses was her *dot*—a roll of dirty bank notes. She wept because she had rushed to call on happiness, only to find herself back in this disgusting office. She suddenly realized all the horror, all the evil smell of these dark corners. She realized how coarsely Gaston had sniggered as he had kicked poor Margot. For the first time she doubted her father's goodness. She wept, not because her eyes were unlike the eyes of others, but rather because it seemed to her that she had eyes, eyes like those of everybody else. She forgot Perrault's fairy tales. She was seeing life.

And below, in the courtyard, Margot wept. She had wanted to rescue the blind girl. She had wanted to be a film heroine. And now, look how badly she had been treated. Yes, she was the girl from the Gaverni Bar. Yes, she went to hotels with men. But she never stole or killed. She had not come here for the sake of money. She had even lost her new hat. She had soiled her coat in the stinking slime that covered the steps. She had a big bruise on her cheek. She would not be able to go to the Gaverni Bar to-night. Who was to buy her a new hat?

She wept, and she recalled all her troubles—how the dark mustached shop boy at Nancy had betrayed her; how she had been cheated by men who had demanded obscenities from her and then crept away without paying; the disgusting, perspiring beasts; that man last night! . . .

Margot cried for a long time in the dark courtyard where

it seemed they were forever cleaning drains, where a baby howled without ceasing, where slops were flung from the upper windows. No one came to comfort her. Who, indeed, could comfort her? Life had been shown her instead of a film, that terrible, black life which was like the hateful courtyard of No. 17 Rue Thiboumery.

## XXI

### *Concerning the Auburn-haired Girl*

WITH a fair in full swing, the big square of the Place de la Bastille looked from a distance like a fairy theater. Gas flares cast bright streaks and patches of light, which alternated with deep, dark shadows. The flags alone must have cost a small fortune, hundreds of gay little flags. For once, they were not the insignia of contending nations, but a bright rainbow: crimson for the sun, blue for the sky, emerald for the earth.

Showmen of every sort had assembled there. There were merry-go-rounds, learned pigs, acrobats, conjurors, men selling pistachio nuts or the latest thing in braces, and even a ventriloquist. All the booth owners, shouting themselves hoarse with invitations to the public to visit their shows, joked, quarreled, turned the handles of organs, and pulled the unintelligent tails of intelligent pigs, so that their squealing made itself heard above all the din. In a quarter of an hour this ordinary city square had been turned into a field of mystery, presided over by a band of gypsies.

Merry-go-rounds were the most conspicuous of the attractions. Uttering little shrieks, girls whirled round and round on wooden hippopotamuses whose faces bore amiable grins not unlike that of M. Raymond Ney at his best moments.

"Once more! It's only five sous! Now, young fellows, surely you don't grudge five sous for your merry maids?"

They were as giddy as if they had drunk many liqueurs or been carousing. These little work girls from the Faubourg



St. Antoine were out to enjoy themselves. Those who did not need the merry-go-round to make them giddy could go into a neighboring tent where, if their hands didn't shake, they could fish for a jar of sugar plums or even a bottle of fizzy wine. It was generally the girls who were attracted there, while the young men preferred to shoot at grinning dolls or at clap pipes as they were spun rapidly round and round. Oh, this was not war; it was something much safer and more amusing.

There were establishments charging admission for those who preferred more select entertainments. There was, for instance, a cinema in which the indefatigable Charlot smashed crockery. It seemed strange that there should be any soup tureens left on earth, that he had not destroyed them all. Entrance, four sous. That is nothing to speak of. Soup tureens cost much more than that. Charlot smashed his china rapidly but silently. If you wanted noise you must go to the pigs. They were not at all like the pigs of the countryside to which you are accustomed. They wore blue uniforms. They drove little carriages and read the *Petit Parisien*. "They are not pigs. They are miracles of nature. Come in, come in!"

The most exacting public could fall back on the entertainment offered by the Brothers Chevelot. True, the price was high: One franc, forty-five centimes! But think what you got for it! Lampoons on cuckold ministers of state, riders jumping through hoops, jugglers balancing a multitude of plates on their noses without breaking any—not like that silly Charlot—tight-rope dancers, clowns, and even monkeys!

"Come in, brigadier, one franc, forty-five, twenty-nine sous." But the brigadier prefers to pay six sous to see the performing fleas. "Cheap and a damned good show." Well, tastes differ.

Booth holders shouted, crackers went off, pigs squealed, the people crowded. The smiles exchanged between public and performers proved that the whole fair was a great success.

There was apparently only one man there without a smile, and that was Andrew. His forehead was furrowed into a frown, he made his way through the throng, showing no interest in either the shooting gallery or the learned pigs. Had he come there on any other day he would surely have behaved differently. Andrew, the jolly Andrew, would have mounted a hippopotamus, or danced to the tunes of the roundabout. But now he was gloomy. Bad news. He was being shadowed. He must change his passport. He had nowhere to spend the night. He must be off to Toulon at once or he might get trapped. This was Tuesday. Well, Thursday or Friday at latest. But it was by no means certain that Pouatras would be ready, and he had meant to go too. Pouatras was the only person through whom Andrew could keep in touch with the organization. He was a good worker, a sound Communist. Things ought to move with him. It would be too stupid to get caught before anything had been done.

All this merrymaking in the Bastille Square irritated Andrew. The hippopotamuses seemed loathsome. He did not believe in the laughing girls; they were shamming, while all the time they were really feeling anything but happy. The hog in uniform reminded him of the bourgeois on a Soviet placard. Faugh! What was there funny in it? He saw nothing but ineptitude in the whole business.

It gave him a feeling of almost physical nausea such as he often experienced in Paris, the sort of feeling caused by the smell of cooking in an unventilated kitchen. He thought gloomily, Why on earth did I come here? There have been bad times in Russia, but they have always passed,

as bad weather passes. When he had seen the Kursk peasants go out with icons to meet the White Army, he had felt furious, absolutely furious, but he had not despaired. He knew that within a month or two they would have come to their senses and be hiding in the woods to shoot officers from ambush. But here on even the brightest day one lost hope; indeed, the hopelessness seemed to be engendered by the sun. The working men read articles in *L'Humanité* about backing up Russia, about their solidarity with their Rhineland brothers; they always agreed, they were indignant with the government, they said, "We'll show them what's what," and then they went to their cafés, drank aperitives, danced, played tric-trac, and forgot that outside the café walls such things existed as Russia, Germany, strife and the Revolution. Since, for good or ill, they had to live somehow, they meant to have a good time. "Garçon, another drink." It was a shame that absinthe was forbidden. Idiotic government! And it seemed to Andrew that the ban on absinthe affected them much more than the occupation of the Ruhr. At such times Andrew felt discouraged. Looking at them now, he saw what they were. Whirling on the hippopotamuses, roaring with laughter at Charlot smashing plates, or applauding bawdy songs. Of course they had plenty of enthusiasm, but it was all spent on cheap amusements. If a juggler dropped a glass, they would indignantly storm the ticket office to demand their money back. But they would disperse quickly as soon as a policeman came up. They could shoot well enough at clay pipes; but only at clay pipes. No, these men could never have made the October Revolution.

He strolled about the square, gloomily watching the harmless amusements of the crowd from under his scowling brows. Nor could the most eloquent showman entice into his booth the dejected young man in the leather cap. Having

made the round of the fair, he paused at a dark corner where several large caravans were parked. There lived the trainers of the pigs, the pigs themselves, the acrobats, the conjurers, and many others whose business it was to amuse suburban Paris. He found an old yellow caravan with a little board, "The Travelling Circus of the Brothers Chevelot," and he tapped on the tiny window.

"Who's there?"

"I want to see Mademoiselle Lisette."

"That's me."

"Is Pierre here?"

"Come inside."

Andrew got inside with some difficulty. It was dark and smelt of cheap powder and clothes. He could not distinguish the face of the girl to whom he was talking.

"Pierre is not here. He was arrested last night. He had time to slip me a note. He asked me to tell you to go away as quickly as possible. He is in the Santé Prison. Poor Pierre!"

No, Pierre had no reason to doubt his auburn-haired girl. Perhaps she was capricious at times. Who is not? But by the way in which she said, "Poor Pierre," by the way her little voice trembled, it was clear beyond a doubt that she had admitted Pierre not only into the dark caravan but into her heart as well.

Her words crushed Andrew. Pouatras had been trapped. He, Andrew, was being shadowed. He must be off. The connecting link between himself and the organization was broken. There was no time to repair it. He would have to go to Toulon without instructions and without seeing anyone. All his strength seemed to leave him.

"Pierre is splendid," Lisette continued. "He's not like the others; he's not a coward. You're Pierre's friend? You're a Russian? Well, the Russians are no cowards. Oh, how I

hate them. My father was a Communist. The Versailles soldiers shot him through the right leg. If there is another Commune I shall shoot too. We'll get them this time."

Andrew was disconcerted. He even blushed, but it was dark in the caravan. How absolutely wrong he had been. This little auburn-haired girl was stronger and wiser than he. He pressed her hand warmly.

"Yes, yes, of course; your Pierre is splendid. And you, you too. Of course we shall get them."

"I must go now," said Lisette. "My turn is on. Come to the front, you'll see what I do. Do come, please do. I don't feel up to much to-day. I shall feel calmer if you are there. Pierre is arrested, and to dance on a rope one must be calm, quite calm."

Andrew sat in the front row. A moment later a little girl, almost a child, ran into the ring, dressed in a short beaded skirt. She was raised to the rope. She stretched out her hands and smiled. She began to dance. Andrew's mind was a blank. His eyes followed the dancer as though they could hold her up. At moments he feared that she would fall. He rose, ready to rush into the ring. But she was not falling. She was executing the most difficult part of her turn. She stood on one foot while she beat time to the music with her hands. The director of the circus, an old clown and the only survivor of the Chevelot brothers (the other had long since died), waved his baton crying, "Courage, courage."

And, gazing straight at Andrew, smiling now for him alone, little Lisette, daughter of the Communist and friend of the chauffeur Pouatras, gayly echoed the old clown—"Courage, courage!"

Andrew rose. His recent doubts had all disappeared. He crossed the square with resolute strides. He no longer had any feeling of anger for the gay crowd. No, he trusted it;



he loved it. Were they not the great proletariat of Paris? Might they not surge out on the morrow to defend a new Commune? Let them have a good time! Let them shoot at clay pipes! Andrew had felt the pulsation of their heart, the heart of the people of Paris.

Was it not on this very square that the sans-culottes danced the carmagnole? Had not the veterans of '48 sat at this very corner handing out bullets to the insurgents?— to the masons, the bakers, the weavers?

And the masons, the bakers, the weavers, had known only one thing: as many bullets as possible for the Versailles soldiers, and the last ones for themselves. A great people! She was a true daughter of Paris, this little Lisette! She might powder her capricious little nose and pout her lips, but she knew that "we shall get them." No, Andrew was not alone. He must work. He must go to Toulon the day after to-morrow.

He might have gone to-morrow. But Jeanne? He must see Jeanne. He went into a small café, empty except for two old men who were playing dominoes. He asked for a cup of coffee and, standing at the bar, hastily wrote her a few words. They must meet on the morrow. When he came out it was dark and the street was empty. The tired voices of the organs in the Place de la Bastille barely reached him. A warm wet wind was blowing from the Channel; it made one's lips salt. It was a wind full of promise. All through March it infused life into the old town. Andrew paused and looked about him: high windowless walls, a black sky, emptiness. And then the thought of the auburn-haired girl Lisette, who had cried "Courage," came to him, the thought of Paris, of Jeanne's great love, of the Revolution, of Russia, and it all resolved itself into the somber happiness of one who lives and strives and loves.

## XXII

### *It Will Need a Lot of Touching Up*

IT HAD begun in the evening. When Mlle Fallette had brought his linden tea and asked if he required anything further, Jules Lebeau was already feeling the premonitory symptoms of a heart attack. He had even wanted to detain the old housekeeper and ask her to sleep in the study. She would, of course, have consented. It was one of her duties. But Jules Lebeau was superstitious and thought if he did that he would grow worse. One always had to play hide and seek with illness. He would drink a cup of tea and lie down. He would pretend that he was quite well. Who could tell? He might really go to sleep. Mlle Fallette had been gone for some time. The linden tea was cold. Jules Lebeau lay there gasping. His heart was knocking tumultuously as though trying to tear itself out of his body. Jules Lebeau wanted to get up, to dress, to go out into the street where there was plenty of air, where it was easier to breathe, where life was simple and sociable in the stream of passers-by, where there was none of this strain, no idols, no prescriptions, no medicine bottles. But he could not get up. It seemed as though his swollen legs had already detached themselves from Jules Lebeau and that it was only by the merest accident they were lying near him on the sofa. His agitation increased. He kept raising his eyes to the clock—the hands moved slowly. It was three o'clock for a long time, then three-twenty, three-twenty-five. It would be easier in the morning. Mlle Fallette would come in the morning. It would be

light in the morning. But morning was still a long way off. Three-thirty-five.

Suddenly his heart seemed to fail. It was like a drunkard shut up in a cage, who falls suddenly insensible to the floor after having beaten on the door, made a disturbance, screamed. Probably the heart was still working since Jules Lebeau was still alive, but he felt as though it had stopped. He reached with difficulty the bottle that stood on his night table and greedily gulped down his bitter dose. But even digitalis was no use this time.

Then, slightly raising his thin gray head, Jules Lebeau once more looked at the clock and said aloud, not as though he were talking to a few wooden idols, but as if he were formally addressing the packed audience of a huge theater, "And so I die."

He must die simply and wisely, as he had lived. How many times he had described death in his novels, trying to reproduce every rattle, every convulsion. Had he not often thought of death? Death is a mystery to man. There is mystery for man in everything. Man needs black gods and white gods; humanity is nothing but a vast kindergarten. His path had led him among a lot of children. He had watched them as children; sometimes he had patted them on the head, sometimes he had scolded them, but he had always felt contempt for them. When they were at the point of death people trembled, clinging to the hands of the living or hiding their heads in the cassocks of the priests. Jules Lebeau would die as simply as the Acropolis had fallen into ruin, as simply as the roses shed their petals.

There was a high wind outside. One of the study shutters suddenly flapped. It sounded like a loud knock at the door. Jules Lebeau said automatically: "Come in."

Then he smiled. To whom had he said that? To Madam Death? Splendid! Death was not the jury of Academicians

—it was necessary to treat her with politeness. Jules Lebeau's lips were pleased and assumed their wonted ironical smile.

His heart began to flutter again. Jules Lebeau wanted to take a deep breath but could not. Ten minutes to four. His suffering resembled that of a man who has fastened the straps of his portmanteau. He is afraid that he will be late, but suddenly remembers that he has forgotten something. The portmanteau has already been taken out, the door is wide open. Wait a minute; what is it that he has forgotten? He made a careful scrutiny of the study. The Polynesian monster shamelessly blinked at him. Suddenly he noticed a long sheet of paper near his sofa. Of course, that was what he had been writing that day, up to the moment when Mlle Fallette had brought his tea. There was only one phrase on this sheet. It was surrounded by a mass of corrections. "Lucy smiled." "Smiled" had been crossed out, and the same fate had befallen "was silent," "sighed," "wept." There remained only the one word "Lucy." When he looked at this sheet of paper Jules Lebeau shuddered. What? Death already? And his book? Where had he stopped? He must pick up the sheet at once. Write! Quicker! Without pause! "Lucy could not breathe." No, that was wrong. It was he, Jules Lebeau, who could not breathe, owing to the angina from which, along with many other ailments, he was suffocating, dying; but Lucy was not dying, she loved. Just what was she going to do? He did not know. He threw the sheet angrily to the floor. He would not write that book. Four o'clock. Why was she so slow? Come in, you are welcome.

Suppose she did suddenly come in, this instant? Jules Lebeau covered his head with his rug. So, at least, the gods would not be able to see his shame. They did not know that Jules Lebeau was full of fear. It was a purely animal fear. He clutched his breast; there was still a beat, although

the beat was feeble and uneven. How empty it was here! If only Mlle Fallette would come! If only someone would pity him or even pretend to pity him. The great writer was so afraid to die. But there was no one. Why had others wives, children, friends?

Then a simple thought came into that mind of his which had been so accustomed to complicated and fantastic ideas: why, I myself have never loved. How can I know whether Lucy smiled or wept when she learned that Paul loved her? I do not know. I know nothing.

The discovery was more painful than the realization that the book would never be finished. He had lived sixty-two years. It was five minutes past four. He had never known that which the world regarded as the most important, the most supremely beautiful of all things. Were not all those books over there about love? But perhaps their authors, too, had known nothing of love. Curse the books! What about Mlle Fallette? There was a niece who came to see her sometimes; her chatter had irritated him. So Made-moiselle loved, and when she was dying that child would come to her and weep. It must be good to have someone near you weeping. Better than books. The postman probably loved, so did the concierge and the bookbinder. What did it all mean? Were they cleverer than the clever Jules Lebeau? Was it possible that the secret of happiness, hidden from him, was known to everyone in the world? He was left with his books and his fame. He might have married. Indeed, he remembered some talk about it; some young girl. He seemed to remember that she had been very much in love with him. He had heard later that she had poisoned herself. Perhaps he ought to write "Lucy poisoned herself"? No, no, Paul was wiser than Jules Lebeau—he loved Lucy. Jules Lebeau had not wanted to marry. He had been afraid that love would take up too much of his time. He had



wanted to write books, lots of books. She might have been alive beside him now. What was that girl's name? No, he could not remember. It was—well, let us call her Lucy. She would have clasped his hand—"Dearest, I am with you." There would have been children. The concierge had a son at Bordeaux. When she had been ill he had come to see her. There would have been a granddaughter. The child would have wept. Weep, then, weep. It would be easier for Jules Lebeau if there were someone weeping for him.

But even the Spanish Christ did not know how to weep; its tears were painted tears.

Eighteen minutes past four. Perhaps it was not too late. This was just an ordinary attack. He would call in Professor Veret to-morrow. He was not going to die. People lived till seventy—another eight years. He would get rid of all his books. He would get Mlle Fallette's niece to live in the house. He would spoil her. She should have sweets and dolls every day. He would sing to her. His mother used to sing to him. Only, he must remember—what was it he must remember? Ah, yes, Jules Lebeau had had a mother, like everybody else. After leaving college he had written some verses which he had wanted to take personally to the editor of a journal, and his mother had insisted on tying his tie for him, and he remembered how her hand had shaken with excitement as she did so. Yes, Jules Lebeau had had a mother. But what was it that she had sung? Ah, he had it. She had sung about a little bird that fluttered: "*Un oiseau volivolette.*"

Jules Lebeau began to sing with his cracked voice, and all the gods shivered, alarmed at such unusual behavior from the great writer.

His heart was beating desperately. He had better stop indulging in such foolish thoughts. It would be a good thing to last a few more days. A quarter to five. How un-

bearably empty it was here. Jules Lebeau felt that he must recall the face of some living being. It was a long time since he had seen anyone. He did not count Mlle Fallette's wrinkled, birdlike little face—she ranked with the idols. That Russian? Jules Lebeau saw Andrew's smile and tried to respond with a smile, but he could only produce his usual ironical grimace. How his footsteps had rung out! He had proved himself to be cleverer than Jules Lebeau. He had the Revolution. To be able to walk like that must be fine. Those strange people were not living in vain. Probably they did not fear death as much as he did. Or, was it merely a new kind of clerical cassock in which to hide their heads? It didn't matter. Jules Lebeau would philosophize no longer. He was simply old, he was ill, he was dying. He had not strength enough to take a breath. But he must take a breath or he would die at once. Where was his heart? Why was it no longer there? It was stifling here, and he was suffocating. If he died of suffocation his tongue would protrude as Zola's had done. He must open the window. Quicker. Only first he must look at the clock. Past five.

Jules Lebeau dragged himself from the sofa. His swollen legs would not obey him. Then he crawled. He crawled for a long time, gasping for breath, damp with perspiration. He caught hold of the bookshelf. Then he managed to reach the window. Gathering all his strength together, he raised himself and got it open. It was a large French window. He lay there trying to breathe. A damp March wind was blowing from the Channel, that same wind which infused life into the old town, which had gladdened and encouraged Andrew. But it brought no relief to Jules Lebeau. It blew over him, but it did not reach his lungs. The wind was mocking him. Dawn was breaking. It was the hour at which Jeanne and Andrew were in a deep, sound sleep, the hour at which all young and healthy people were asleep, when

the newborn babes were whimpering in the Maternity Hospital at the Rue Assa, when the old, who had lived their span, were dying in the Hôtel Dieu, that other hospital near Notre Dame. It was the hour of breaking.

Jules Lebeau knew nothing of all that; he no longer even raised his eyes to the clock. He was still struggling for breath. His thoughts were confused. Suddenly his hitherto inert legs moved. He seemed to be running. He was in the Rue St. Père. Someone was running after him. He must turn to the right into the Boulevard St. Germain. His gods, his white gods and his black, were running after him. But he would elude them. Only two more houses. There was someone standing there. His mother. A young girl. Mlle Fallette's niece. The Communist. Wait. He wanted to live and to love. He could not die now.

What he thought was life and escape was in fact the death agony. There was one convulsive spasm, and he was still. The lips which had been wont to smile so ironically still moved. The heart, balancing its account, gave a few feeble throbs. Then there was nothing.

Jules Lebeau, the great writer, lay on the floor near the open window of the study which was now full of bright daylight. His face expressed such misery, such fear, that when Mademoiselle entered she screamed and ran out of the room. She did not mourn Jules Lebeau. He was old, dry, unfriendly. But that face! And remembering the grimace on the face of the dead man, Mlle Fallette burst into tears.

Then she bethought herself of her duty. She ran to the telephone. She had long ago arranged that the editor of the *Matin* should be the first to know when the sad event took place which everyone had been expecting. On hearing her news, the editor said, "The nation will mourn. I will send a reporter and a photographer at once."

Then he sat down and wrote an obituary notice: "Last night a great mind, a master of satire, passed peacefully and painlessly away."

When the reporter and photographer entered the study where Jules Lebeau was already laid out, they shuddered. Neither Mlle Fallette nor the concierge who had helped her had been able to do anything with the face of the great writer. The lips which during his lifetime had smiled ironically now screamed: "I want to live. I am afraid to die."

The photographer turned helplessly to the reporter: "Can we photograph that? What would the public say? Is that the face of the author of *Monsieur Begemotte's Conclusions*?"

The presence of the dead man, the grimace on his face, filled the reporter with trepidation. He stammered with great difficulty, "It will n-n-need—will need a lot of touching up."

## XXIII

### *Fat, Too, Can Be Stirred Up*

IN ORDER to conduct a detective agency with success one must have a sound, industrious heart. It is a profession that offers no repose. One experiences as many hopes, as many disappointments in the course of one day as would suffice for the lifetime of an ordinary man, a mere mortal. Let us take one day—it was Wednesday, the sixth of March—one short day in the life of M. Raymond Ney. Might it not be made the theme of a tragic story with a moral?

The excitement began at the moment when Rotten-nose, breathless from an excess of emotion, ran into the office and told M. Raymond Ney that an American, a really rich American, had called. That was an event. A man with a collection of bank notes had come into this office where even rusty nibs were saved up. Was it not a miracle? Mr. Jacks knew quite a lot of French words, but he pronounced them in such a way that to the puzzled Gaston they sounded exactly like English. But they know how to put two and two together in a private detective bureau. Mr. Jacks demanded a private interview, and it was immediately granted.

Mr. Jacks gave M. Raymond Ney the salient points of his amazing case. He had come to Europe to amuse himself. That was perfectly natural. But in Europe or, to be exact, in Paris, something rather unpleasant had happened. Had Mr. Jacks not found Europe to his taste? Had they served him a steak at the Carlton that was not quite fresh? Had some star from the Moulin Rouge or the Gaverni, with whom



he had spent the night, left him an undesirable souvenir? Oh, no, something quite different. Mr. Jacks had come over with his wife. Mrs. Jacks had a necklace, of course she had a lot of necklaces, but this one was particularly valuable. It contained an eighteen-carat diamond. On hearing this figure M. Ney felt a shiver down his spine. His fat exuded perspiration.

The necklace broke. Necklaces, or rather their fastenings, frequently break, and not only in detective stories. Mr. Jacks took the necklace to Brié, a jeweler in the Rue St. Honoré, to be repaired. And what do you suppose happened? The diamond disappeared. This also happens in real life and not only in novels. Mr. Jacks rang up the Prefect. Brié's flat was searched by the police. The jeweler was sent to prison. But, alas, the diamond was not found.

If M. Raymond Ney found that little stone his reward would amount to—well, it would amount to eighty thousand dollars. And that, at the current rate of exchange, was about a million francs.

On hearing this second figure M. Raymond Ney's well-balanced heart became indecently riotous under his many rolls of fat. The director undid all the buttons of his waistcoat.

As soon as the American had gone everything in the bureau was turned upside down. Rotten-nose was called into the study for instructions. Detectives received cash for taxis. The telephone buzzed incessantly. Every alley was investigated.

After lunch, at which M. Raymond Ney did not eat so much as one plate of bacon fat, his recent feeling of elation gave way to one of hopelessness. There was no diamond. If it did weigh eighteen carats, what good was that to M. Raymond Ney? The carats would remain in the possession of the cunning jeweler who would sooner or later come out of

prison and would hide rolls of bank notes in his secret cupboard. A million as a reward! It was fabulous! But M. Raymond Ney had no prospect of getting it. Mr. Jacks might just as well have promised two million—it's easy enough to make promises. But how was one to find a small stone that had been stolen four days ago? Absurd! M. Raymond Ney had simply been taken in. He had already spent more than two hundred francs on the business; he had promised extra pay to all his men. Would the American at least pay that money back? Nothing but expenses. Nothing but unpleasantness.

The rolls of fat creased themselves into a frown. The rolls of fat shrunk. The rolls of fat complained bitterly of the cruelty of fate.

Then came the second event, and it excited M. Raymond Ney even more than the eighteen-carat diamond had done. Wednesday, March 6th, was certainly a fateful day.

This second misfortune was heralded by a most insignificant little tailor from the Boulevard Port Royal. He came to have a small matter investigated. A client wanted to give him an order for a whole outfit: a dinner jacket, two lounge suits, a tweed suit, a waistcoat—it came to eight thousand francs in all. The client asked for credit. It was true that the client inspired confidence, but the tailor was skeptical and had no desire to be swindled. He preferred to pay for an investigation. M. Raymond Ney did not usually interfere in such trifling matters. They were Gaston's province. But he was out at the moment. He was looking for the diamond. The director therefore attended to the tailor himself.

"Very good; it will cost you fifty francs and expenses. What's your client's name?"

"It's a very difficult name; I shall never be able to pronounce it. But you can see it. I've got it written down."

Having glanced at the paper, the rolls of fat wobbled and sat down suddenly on the chair which an attentive detective placed for them. M. Raymond Ney drank a glass of water and called young Alfred in a high voice quite unlike his usual tones: "Go at once to 92 Avenue Henri Martin. Find out if this man is still living there and what is his standing. You understand what I mean?"

And M. Raymond Ney handed Alfred the paper which the tailor had given him.

Alfred did not return until six o'clock in the evening, which means that he had spent over two hours on his investigations. M. Raymond Ney had spent those two hours in his office without moving, breathing heavily in short gasps. When Alfred returned, M. Raymond Ney, putting a finger to his lips, led him into the study and listened to his report of his inquiries.

The gentleman was no longer at 92 Avenue Henri Martin. According to the concierge, he was a gambler and altogether a suspicious character. His rent was owing for a whole quarter. A fortnight ago he had lost his last centime and had moved to a small hotel in the Rue Mouton Duvernet, leaving the concierge his dress suit in lieu of payment. Alfred had gone to the hotel. The man had a bad reputation there. He did not pay for his room. He asked for wine on credit. It was a horrible hotel. The charge for the room was only three francs a day. One could give the tailor a very definite answer.

At that M. Raymond Ney lost his self-control: "The tailor! What has the tailor got to do with it? I have suffered—I, Raymond Ney! He came here to supper every night. He borrowed four hundred francs from me. He has covered a father's gray hairs with ridicule. I will crush him!"

But in the swindler's absence it was the telephone that

M. Raymond Ney seized, as though he meant to crush that: "Gobelin one seven oh two. Is that M. Juny's bank? Raymond Ney speaking. Do you remember my making inquiries about Evers shares? . . . Yes. Yes. In November. You promised to find out. . . . Yes. Yes. Russian. . . . No, it's petroleum. . . . What do you say—Bolsheviks? No, English. . . . I am mistaken? You say that I am mistaken? They are worth nothing? Nothing? . . ."

M. Raymond Ney flung down the receiver and looked round the empty study. Only the safe was to be trusted. And the disgusted mass of fat leaned tenderly against the beloved safe.

A little later Gaston knocked at the door. Had he found it? No, Rotten-nose was gloomy. The diamond was nowhere to be found.

"Hunt for it! Hunt all night. Find it. You must find it. I'll give you a hundred thousand francs if you find it. Moreover——" A brilliant idea irradiated the weary mass of fat—

"I know your poor wife has cancer. I am sure that she can't last for more than a year. The doctor told me so. You'll be left with two daughters on your hands. Find the diamond and you shall have Gabrielle. She's blind, but she loves children. Then I'll make you my partner, and when I die you will get all this." M. Raymond Ney fondly patted the safe.

"But Mademoiselle Gabrielle has a fiancé."

"He's not a fiancé. He's a swindler. He's a blackguard. He's—Azerbaijan."

## XXIV

### *The Bank Is Broken*

HALIBIEFF, on his way to see Gabrielle, was in the best of spirits, though it is true he had recently had a certain amount of unpleasantness. There had been a small catastrophe on the morrow of his debauch with Margot. That had been at the Martini Casino. He had lost in one short hour three thousand francs which had been all that remained of his former riches. His last chance had gone when he was holding the bank. There had been more than two thousand francs in the bank, but a brazen-faced Persian had bought a card, smiled, and calmly put the two thousand into his waistcoat pocket.

His room in the Hôtel Mouton Duvernet was far from comfortable. Indeed, it was no better than the famous room in the Hôtel Crimea at Theodosia. Even the waiter Louis reminded him of the stingy Aristrach. Even the bugs bit him. Those creatures recognize no frontiers.

But Halibieff had by no means lost heart. At Theodosia it had been necessary for him to fabricate documents and to submit to the insults of an irate diplomat. Whereas now his prospects were of the brightest. His wedding was fixed for the seventeenth. True, the blind girl became more terrifying every day. She had entirely stopped talking to Halibieff. She had grown simply dumb, as though being blind was not sufficient. But that was merely nonsense. There was no need to pay any attention to that. Once get the wedding over, and then . . . First of all, by hook or by crook, he must get hold of that brunette, his bride's



cousin. He would never rest till he got her. She was a thriller!

But that would come later. To-day he must borrow a little, say, a thousand francs, from his future father-in-law. Then he would be able to pay a visit to that little fool from Gaverni's. She was up to a trick or two.

These were the pleasant anticipations with which Halibieff entered the Neys' flat. The head of the house himself opened the door to him. M. Raymond Ney, blocking the door to Gabrielle's room with his fat body, greeted him gloomily: "I want to have a little private conversation with you."

Halibieff smiled. How extraordinary apropos! Gives me an opportunity to ask for that thousand.

The conversation was short. Only M. Raymond Ney spoke. Halibieff was silent. No, he did not ask for that thousand francs. His self-assurance completely disappeared. He was pitiful. The labors of four months had been wasted. On hearing the words "Rue Mouton Duvernet," "investigation," "shares," Halibieff began to fix his eyes on the door.

He was clever enough not to answer. What would be the good of making theatrical scenes? He must clear out. But, oh, must he once more face a miserable existence in an icy hotel bedroom? Instead of getting Margot from the Gaverni, must he go supperless to bed under a grimy eiderdown to be bitten by insects? Poor Halibieff, resign yourself. You are down and out. The most insignificant of detectives or police dogs would be a Cræsus compared with you.

At last Halibieff spoke. There were sobs in his voice. It was true despair.

"M. Ney, you are magnanimous. I am to blame. I will not justify myself. I ask only for your indulgence. Have pity on me. I have fallen low. I am very unhappy. There was a time in my own country when I was an honest man. I had a

bank. All Moscow trusted me. Everybody used to say, 'Well, if Halibieff promised, it's sure to be all right.' The Bolsheviks robbed me. They took everything I had—even the portrait of my dead mother. You see, I can't restrain my tears at the memory of those days."

Halibieff's eyes were really perspiring. No tragedian in the world ever reached such heights.

But M. Raymond Ney's fat remained unmoved. He grunted, "Of course the Bolsheviks are bandits, but you are one yourself."

"No, M. Ney. You have every right to insult me. You can say that I am a charlatan, that I deceived you; but you must not call me a Bolshevik. I struggled, a life-and-death struggle, with those robbers. I killed three Bolsheviks with my own hands. I was wounded in the leg. Had it not been for merciful France, I should have been lost. Put yourself in my place, M. Ney. I am in a foreign country. I am a refugee. Until to-day I have not dared to confess that I was penniless, I was afraid of incurring your contempt. Imagine yourself in my place for a moment. Imagine for a moment that you have a revolution here, that the Communists rob you of everything——"

M. Raymond Ney indignantly interrupted him: "No such thing could ever happen here. We have a police force, a large police force." He shielded his beloved safe from such terrible phantoms with his body.

But Halibieff continued: "We had a weak police force, and it did not know how to protect decent people. I lost everything. To-morrow I must go and clean windows or polish boots in the street. Have pity on me, dear M. Ney. A little help. I ask very little. Only a thousand francs. With that money I can start a little business. I shall find my feet. And when this hideous Revolution ends in Russia I will repay my debt. I will repay it a hundredfold. I will sign an I. O. U.

for a hundred thousand francs here and now. Your kindness will not go unrewarded."

Poor Castor from Cherkessoff Lane, he had played till he could no longer distinguish the cards. He was simple-minded enough to believe that eloquence could touch this museum specimen of obesity. Who knows? Suppose he should soften? If he does, Halibieff will go to the Gaverni, get dead drunk, forget everything in the world, and to-morrow—to-morrow something would turn up.

It was not from any sentimental consideration that M. Raymond Ney refrained from kicking Halibieff out as he had kicked out poor Margot. But if a rusty nib can be of use, how much more a clever man? And in his present position this fellow would do anything. M. Raymond Ney had been wanting a Russian detective for some time. He could get this one for next to nothing. His talent had been proved. How thoroughly he had taken in M. Ney himself! He had forged references: perhaps he had bribed the bank clerk. Yes, that type would go a long way. He should become Gaston's assistant.

"Damn it all, let the government help you. Let the League of Nations help you. I am a pauper myself. I wear shoes with holes in them. A thousand francs! Do you know what that means? It means fifteen pairs of shoes. You've swindled me out of four hundred without reckoning the food you've had. I won't give you anything, I won't give you a sou. But I am not a monster. I'm a decent fellow. Do you hear that, a decent fellow? I shan't turn you out as anyone else would. I realize your situation. I offer you a place in my office. You don't know anything about detective work. You are ignorant. But I have a good deal of work among your fellow countrymen. You will shadow Russians; for the sake of Russians. It will be patriotic work. I pay an experienced detective three hundred a month. You're a novice, and I'll

give you two hundred. Do you hear that? It's true. I am magnanimous, damn it. My generosity will be my ruin. I don't want any thanks; I'm upset enough to-day as it is."

Halibieff had not the slightest intention of thanking M. Ney. Two hundred francs indeed! Why, he had paid more than that to the girl from the Gaverni for one night! No, he would rather kill somebody.

Halibieff rose. He was no longer a contemptible cheat, caught in the act of manipulating the cards. He was a statue, a marble statue, the very embodiment of dignity. He even leaned against the edge of the table as if it were the pedestal of a column. He was like the portrait of the Emperor Nicholas I which had hung in the big hall of the classical school where Halibieff had been educated. And the words he uttered were magnificent, full of irony: "You are mistaken, sir, fundamentally mistaken. You take me for an apache or a shopkeeper. You have before you a born gentleman. During the War of Liberation my great-grandfather was Commander of Lille. You ought to be proud to have me under your roof. A beggared aristocrat is superior to a caddish upstart. Please remember, my good sir, that the former Marshal of the Nobility, Chamberlain, and Equerry, Nikifor Halibieff, cannot become a detective. I have the honor to bid you good-day."

The man of fat was so overwhelmed that he dared not move. The metamorphosis of the wretched beggar into the proud "chamberlain" was too astounding. M. Ney could not recover himself for a long time after Halibieff had gone. Dazed, he looked round the room. Thank God, the safe was still in its place. Then he murmured pensively, "Yes, that man will go a long way. Perhaps it would have been worth while to give him Gabrielle. No, I want a money partner. I'm a pauper, damn it, I'm a pauper. All my capital is tied up."

Halibieff left M. Ney's study with an independent, a regal air. He found himself in the labyrinth of the office, which was quite empty except for Jeanne, sitting in a corner. All the detectives were rushing about town in search of the diamond. On catching sight of her, Halibieff forgot how upset he had been. Smoothing his head with an air of gallantry he smiled. He had nothing to lose. He was here for the last time: "Charming lady, I must reach some understanding with you. Your eyes have destroyed my peace. I am a polar bear, but I love Southern warmth. I am no longer engaged to that blind girl. I am free, free as a bird. So are you. In a word, come and see me this evening. We'll have a gypsy camp. 'I am the gypsy baron——'"

"I beg you never to come near me," cried Jeanne.

Halibieff's quick hand seized her shoulder, but she freed herself and ran away from him.

Halibieff called after her, "So much the worse for you, Miss Touch-me-not. I'll get you. I'll violate you three times over."

Suddenly he noticed that Jeanne, in her flight, had left her bag on the table. He opened it with a businesslike air. No, he was not thinking of stealing two francs for a sausage roll. He was moved by other, more emotional thoughts; he was jealous. That was why he took from the bag whatever it held of spiritual value, that is, a short note, written in Russian, and a small photograph. Pocketing his booty, he gave vent to a few lewd oaths and went his way.

He read the stolen note under a gas lamp on the dark, ill-smelling staircase. Some unknown person (there was no signature) wrote to Jeanne:

"We will meet to-morrow. I must be very careful. Everything is ready. I shall have the money. I shall expect you at



eight at the place on which we agreed. I am going the day after to-morrow. Courage."

The text of the note somewhat puzzled Halibieff. It looked suspicious. He examined the photograph with curiosity. It was a small picture cut from a passport; its corner bore the trace of some stamp or other. The broad face was merrily smiling. That smile irritated Halibieff. You could see at once that he was her lover. She took a different tone with him, of course. There it was "more" and "again"; with him, Halibieff, it was "get out." Am I not more attractive than that fool? Yes, but that man has money. He writes, "I shall have the money." That fellow had made a lucky speculation—and had won the brunette. And Halibieff hadn't a hundred francs with which to go to the Gaverni. He hadn't ten francs on which to get drunk at the nearest bar. Halibieff stood on the stairs, looking angrily at the face of his rival. That lucky dog was smiling. He was smiling just as that Persian had smiled at the Martini when he bought a card and broke the bank. And Halibieff was standing on this dark staircase. Halibieff had to face a cold bedroom and the contemptuous sniffs of the waiter. It was seven o'clock. In an hour from now that impudent fellow would be kissing the girl. Whereas he, Halibieff? He was lost. The bank was broken.

## XXV

### *Concerning Fictitious Plans and a Perfectly Innocent Supper*

EVERYTHING happened exactly as Halibieff had foreseen. Louis, the waiter, blew his nose sarcastically and would not so much as listen to the suggestion that Halibieff should have a bottle of wine on credit. The room was cold as winter. Without undressing, Halibieff threw himself on the double bed, covered himself with the eiderdown, and proceeded to think out his next step. He could not sleep. It was only nine o'clock. Moreover, he was too hungry to sleep; he had had nothing to eat since yesterday. What was he to do? He had long ago sold all his possessions. His cigarette case? No, never. So long as he had that, his success with women was assured. That was a certainty. So long as he retained that, there would be some chance of that little Miss Touch-me-not yielding. He could not part with that. Then what was he to do?

Perhaps he had been too hasty? Had not the good Nechensohn always preached the doctrine: Before you say a word calculate carefully what profit it may bring, or whether there may not be a risk of its causing a loss. He had forgotten the teaching of his prudent Pollux. That Frenchman had certainly humiliated him. It would scarcely be seemly to become a detective. It was one thing to be the director of a respectable bureau; it was quite another to go trotting about the town one's self. Probably a detective would not be able to get into the Hunters' Club. Well,

that might be all very true, but what was he to do? Poverty was no crime. He would have to humble himself. All decent people had to humble themselves these days. He must take his share in the common lot. He would only be doing what the whole of Russia was doing. It might be stupid to accept a salary of two hundred francs. Still, he might get some of it in advance, and then it would be easy enough to make two hundred thousand. The most important thing was to get a foothold. There were nice little pickings to be had there. If one could get hold of an adultery case, for example. Not a word to anyone, frighten everybody, and—put the money in one's own pocket. No, he had been a fool to refuse. He must put that right.

Halibieff crawled from under the quilt, after which he made a thorough search of his pockets. He appeared to have exactly nine sous. He could get a cup of coffee at a stall. He went downstairs quickly to avoid meeting Louis and made his way to the nearest café.

"A cup of coffee."

The proprietress knew Halibieff and, with a pleasant smile, she asked, "With rum, as usual?"

"No, without rum to-day, I have a headache."

With rum it would have cost sixteen sous; he was seven sous short.

Having swallowed some of his coffee, Halibieff went to the telephone. He would ring up M. Ney and say that he agreed to everything. He would ask for a little money in advance, say, fifty francs.

He gave the number. He heard the buzz of the apparatus and, a moment later, an unfamiliar voice said, "Hello."

Another voice, a very familiar one, answered, "It is I. Good-evening, M. Jacks."

Halibieff kept silent. He had been put through as a third. He did not, however, put down the receiver. That was per-

haps the result of his decision not to disdain the calling of a detective, or perhaps he was overcome by ordinary human curiosity. Whatever the cause, Halibieff did not lay down the receiver.

One of the two speakers, whom the other called M. Jacks, spoke very bad French. Halibieff could hardly understand what he said. The conversation was, however, quite short:

"My dear M. Jacks, I congratulate you. Good news. Your diamond has been found."

The tone of the voice, even at several miles' distance, made it easy to guess that Fatty, thoroughly pleased with life, was bubbling with joyous surprise.

"Gaston found it. He is the pride of our establishment. He is the pride of Paris. His photograph will be in all to-morrow's papers."

"Where did he find it?"

"In a parrot's crop. You know what parrots are. They are such greedy——"

Mr. Jacks interrupted him: "Excuse me, I have no time now. You can tell me all about it to-morrow. I will call in the morning; at ten o'clock. I will bring the check for eighty thousand dollars as agreed. Mind none of your men steal it."

"But, M. Jacks, my men——"

"Excuse me, I am in a great hurry. I'm going to the theater. To-morrow at ten. Good-bye."

The voices vanished. Halibieff might have rung up M. Ney again now. The number would surely have been disengaged. But he didn't. He left the telephone. He did not even finish his coffee. He hurriedly paid for it, left the café and returned to his hotel.

About his lips hovered that same smile which we saw in the room of the Hôtel Crimea, in the Constantinople gambling den where he met the frightened Jew, and in the

Englishwoman's stateroom; a rare smile which, as we have already pointed out, was evidence that Halibieff felt inspired. When Halibieff entered his hotel, not only did he make no effort to avoid being seen by Louis, he went in search of him.

Without the slightest hesitation he held out his precious cigarette case: "This is gold. It is worth at least a thousand francs. Circumstances compel me to sell it. I have just heard that my mother is dying at Mentone, where she had gone for her health. I am very much upset. I must go to her at once. I owe the landlady eighty francs. I'll sell you this for three hundred. You'll give the landlady eighty, take twenty for yourself, and I shall have two hundred for the journey. This thing, I repeat, is worth a thousand francs. You'll make a lot on the deal."

Louis dubiously fingered the cigarette case. But the naked lady with the mandolin tempted him, or perhaps not the lady but the hallmark. It really was gold. Halibieff was, for once, not lying. Louis, yielding, offered, "Two hundred."

At any other time Halibieff would have made a show of indignation; he would have bargained with pathos. But at any other time he would not have been selling the cigarette case. Now, with open indifference, he took the two hundred francs and, without even counting them, went to his room. Once there, he put into a clean envelope the letter which he had stolen from Jeanne, pasted it down, put a stamp on it, took a pen and wrote "Mlle"; then, after a moment's hesitation, he put it aside without writing a surname or address and busied himself with other things. Among a lot of rubbish which he had brought with him from Russia he found an old pocketbook. He carefully inspected it and proceeded to put into it a few one-franc notes, some postage stamps, a newspaper clipping from the *Petit Parisien* which happened to be in his room, containing a description of a



sensational robbery, an old cinema ticket, a notice of a firm advertising perfumes, and finally the photograph of the happy owner of the Brunette, and the envelope with its unfinished address. Having done that, Halibieff put the note-case in the inside pocket of his waistcoat. Then he put on, instead of his good overcoat, a torn mackintosh, obviously too small for him, which he had bought for a lira from a second-hand dealer in his worst Constantinople days. He took leave of Louis in the most amicable fashion. "I am going to Mentone by the night train. I shall return in three days if all goes well there. I am leaving my things here. I am keeping my room."

It was about ten o'clock. After such mysterious preparations Halibieff might have been expected to betake himself to some shady place; but on the contrary, he was merely going to supper. Strange! And, stranger still, he was not going to supper at some glittering bar with a plentiful supply of girls, but in the highly reputable Restaurant L'Avenue, opposite the Montparnasse station. This was no mere accident. He chose it deliberately as being thoroughly staid and respectable.

Halibieff selected a small table in a corner and sank contentedly into a soft armchair. An old waiter brought him a footstool. He acknowledged it by a flutter of his eyelids without moving his lips or his neck. The orchestra was playing a suite of Grieg's. It was very pleasant after the jazz bands and Sulo's whistling. Halibieff felt that he was resting body and soul. Paris had certainly worn him out, and he was glad to be in a quiet sanatorium. Well, he might perhaps go to a sanatorium to-morrow. Or perhaps not even to-morrow, perhaps this very night he might start for some quiet place like Mentone, for example, where there was blue sea, where the almonds were in bloom. Perhaps . . . What his plans were he had so far confided to no one.

After dreamily studying the menu he ordered a chicken cutlet, spinach, a half bottle of St. Eustache. It was just the supper a respectable, sensible man would choose in order to avoid overloading his stomach late in the evening. And the old waiter who took his order felt considerable respect for so substantial a client. When Halibieff asked whether the wine had been slightly warmed, there was in that "slightly" such a sense of proportion, of restraint, that the waiter, duly impressed, answered, "Oh, yes, sir, exactly so, slightly warmed."

When Halibieff had eaten his cutlet, he asked for a pear, and when the waiter brought him a fragrant, juicy Duchesse, he even condescended to indulge in a little conversation.

"The fruit is good this year after the hot summer."

"Oh, yes, sir, so is the wine. The wine growers have made a good profit."

"Which can't be said of others, can it? This fearful crisis. How is business with you?"

"Oh, not so bad, sir. Not so bad lately. Indeed, very well lately, sir."

"You're lucky. Others' trades are much worse off. My own, for example. I am a director of a leather chair factory. We are suffering heavy losses. So you say this is a good pear?"

"Oh, yes, sir, the best there is to be had."

By a slight movement of his head Halibieff indicated that he was satisfied and that the conversation was at an end. The waiter respectfully withdrew. It was still early; ten minutes to eleven. Obviously the Mentone train started late. Halibieff dawdled. Saint-Saëns followed Grieg. Coffee and a Cordial Medoc followed the pear.

Halibieff carelessly beckoned the waiter at about eleven and, recognizing the politeness and devotion of the old servant, treated him with condescending familiarity.

"Please bring me a railway time-table, my friend. I am expecting a niece from Havre, and I want to look up the trains."

"In a moment, sir. But you need not trouble. I will look up the night express from Havre myself."

"No, I'd better have the time-table. I am not sure when she started. I want to look up all the trains."

Halibieff studied the time-table long and carefully. His face openly expressed displeasure. Noticing the dissatisfied grimace on the face of the director of the leather chair factory, the old waiter took the liberty of whispering timidly, "Monsieur has not found the train?"

"Yes, I found all that I wanted. But no one can say that our railways are in a satisfactory condition. There are so few trains, and those Boches will not give us any coal."

"Oh, yes, those Boches are dishonest," agreed the waiter meekly. Now that the talk was touching on higher politics he dared not comment on the views expressed by this substantial client.

It was half-past eleven. Perhaps the Mentone train goes in the morning? Perhaps the niece from Havre will arrive tomorrow? Halibieff is in no hurry. The orchestra is playing a potpourri from one of Delibes's operas, and Halibieff sighs sentimentally. Those sighs must be attributed to romantic feeling, for the chicken cutlet had certainly been very light. He must be thinking of the brunette. That brazen-faced fellow who was like the Persian at the Martini was kissing her by now. Halibieff raised his hand to his breast. There, in his pocketbook, was the photograph of his offending rival. And Halibieff's heart was full of hurt feelings. The soft, liquid notes of the music sounded like the gargling of a god. Halibieff hummed softly, "Lakmé, I want you to smile at me." Halibieff wanted the brunette to smile at him. Was it

not a perfectly proper desire? Of course, the dark girl would smile at him. Was he not Halibieff?

At last, glancing at the clock, he called the waiter and asked for his bill. How much? Twenty-one? Very well. The waiter could keep the four as a tip. The waiter was delighted. His faith in this impressive director had been justified. Waiters are able to read people at a glance. Halibieff asks, "Where is your telephone? I am afraid that my niece may have arrived. I want to ring up my house. Is your telephone in a box? My hearing is not very good. I am afraid that the music might interfere with me."

"Oh, no, Monsieur can talk quite freely. The telephone is in a box which the sounds of the orchestra will not penetrate."

Halibieff went toward the commodious telephone box. He looked around. There was no one near. The waiter had gone away. He knew that his client was somewhat deaf. Had he been afraid that his breathing might disturb him? Is there anyone in the world with more common sense than the old waiters of Paris?

Halibieff entered the box. He smiled good humoredly. He had had a good, simple supper in a staid and respectable restaurant. That was all. Then he carefully shut the padded door.

## XXVI

### *How the Commandment, "Thou Shalt Not Lie," Lies Just as All the Other Commandments Lie*

JEANNE was standing looking at the Seine. Green or red splashes of light were reflected on its black surface from time to time. This was the Seine. The Seine on which little steamers would take one to gay Sèvres or to Medon. This was the Seine into which milliners who had been betrayed, gamblers who had been ruined, the workless who had been worn out by hunger, threw themselves in the night. From that black water bloated blue bodies were dragged with grappling hooks and carried to the Morgue. The Morgue was quite near, beside Notre Dame. Jeanne was standing near the Morgue.

This was the Seine, the beautiful Seine, beloved by all poets, into which all the sewers of the twenty police districts of Paris poured themselves. Jeanne had been upset by the note. But suppose he had been arrested? That would mean another separation. Then the Rue Thiboumery again. She could not stay there any longer. M. Raymond Ney, having in mind what Halibieff had told him, no longer saw any reason for spending money on visits to certain ladies and had taken to importuning Jeanne in the night. "You eat my bread and yet you dare refuse?" he would hiss. "What difference can it make to you? Damn it all, there would be plenty left for your men friends."

Jeann resisted, she threatened to scream. Sometimes she ran to Gabrielle. She slept in her clothes as she had done



in the Russian huts. And now it seemed to her that she could not stand another of those nights. Yesterday her uncle had said to her in front of everybody, "Get out of here, you prostitute." She would tell Andrew. Andrew would help her. Andrew would save her. But what if he were arrested? Jeanne remembered Halibieff's threats. M. Raymond Ney was like a hippopotamus, but Halibieff was even more disgusting. One could run away from M. Ney. But Halibieff was a snake. His hands could creep in anywhere; it was impossible to escape them. And remembering those hands Jeanne looked at the water with longing: the Seine.

She next remembered the stolen photograph, and her anxiety became more acute than ever.

The world seemed to her a horrible jungle. On every side there were beasts of prey, cunning beasts, and in that horrible forest there was only one protector—Andrew. But suppose he had been arrested?

And then Jeanne felt ashamed of thinking of herself. If he were arrested it would be terrible: Andrew, the gay Andrew who so loved the wind and freedom, that Andrew, in prison! He had only just begun his work here. How excited he had been when he was telling her about his journey to Toulon. And they might suddenly seize him, shut him up. Perhaps they had already captured him. And Jeanne was powerless to help him.

Jeanne gazed at the Seine more fixedly than ever.

Her dark eyes, their pupils dilated with fear, seemed to penetrate the water, to dive to the bottom, to the place where some unknown body was perhaps awaiting the drag.

He had written that he would be there at eight—now it was nearly nine. He had been arrested. What should she do?

Andrew arrived at a quarter past nine, when Jeanne had already given him up. He had been unable to get to her earlier because he had been shadowed. In order to shake off

the spy he had been obliged to take the underground to the Madeleine—then, at a junction, when changing, he had at the last moment jumped into a train that was going back to the Chatelet. He was tired. He had been on his feet all day. He was so tired that the sight of Jeanne leaning over the parapet had given him a fright for the moment. It had looked to him as though she were flying into the water. The surroundings were gloomy. The stone cadaver of Notre Dame seemed to expand in penetrating deadly cold. The cathedral was like an enormous mammoth rubbing its elephant hide against the low blind heavens. On the right was the Morgue. On the left, the barracks. Against that background, Jeanne looked like a defenceless child. But perhaps that was because Andrew had been worn out by his heavy day. Breathless, he ran toward Jeanne, crying, "What is the matter? What has happened? Why are you standing like that?"

Jeanne was two years younger than Andrew, but when she saw his broad face drawn with pain she somehow felt older, much older, than he, as though she were his mother and must pet him, comfort him, and softly sing, "*Dodo, mon petit André.*"

She had been at the point of telling him everything, of seeking his protection, but when she saw his gray eyes, so sad, so troubled, she forgot the bureau, her uncle, all her fears about the future. Once again she was willing to accept everything as it was if only he would smile. She began to reassure him. No, nothing had happened. But he suspected something, he did not believe her. Those towers, that water, the black, silent water in which some drowned body was awaiting the drag—doubts overwhelmed him.

"You are hiding something from me, Jeanne. You are afraid of grieving me. Have your relatives found out about me? Are they unkind to you? Tell me, tell me the truth."

Andrew asked for the truth. But his eyes, his restless, miserably lost eyes, demanded a lie. He was like a child who begs his mother to give him a chopper so that he can help her. And the mother answers, "Of course you can help me," but gives him a toy instead of the chopper. Andrew was firm, strong, enduring. But he could not have endured Jeanne's sufferings. And, feeling that, Jeanne lied. She was quite happy. Her work was easy. Her uncle? Well, her uncle had his own notions. But, on the whole, he was kind to her; he even spoiled her. There was nothing for Andrew to worry about; she was all right. He must think of himself. He was being shadowed? Was that dangerous? Then he must go away at once, to-morrow, or even better, to-night.

We are taught that it is wrong to lie. Is there not a commandment that forbids lying? But where could one find a truth more beautiful than the lie which this little girl clerk from the Rue Thiboumery told about her kind uncle?

Andrew did not know that she was lying. He was no longer listening to her gentle, considerate words. But this little girl, who was there at his side, leaning over the parapet, who was called Jeanne Ney, began to grow before his very eyes. She grew taller than himself, than the houses, than the cathedral. He stammered incoherently, "But you know, Jeanne, if it's—if it's so—then it's terrible."

Jeanne did not answer. She only stroked his hand. She had known for a long time that all this was terrible, she had known it even in the empty Villa Ibragia.

It was impossible to stand there any longer. They might attract attention. They went along the dark Quay. Andrew turned to the left and crossed a bridge. Andrew thought that Jeanne was going home, and wanted to escort her. Jeanne decided that Andrew must be living somewhere near her. They did not talk about that, they talked about

other things: their childhood, Loirette, Tsaritsin, where Andrew had once met Jeanne.

In spite of the necessity for concealment, in spite of anxiety, detectives, the bureau, and the kind of life they were leading, they were happy. Everything was new to them, every word was a shy caress. They believed they were writing a beautiful book together, and if anyone had stopped them and told them that the book had already been published, word for word, in every language, that every family possessed it, that it might be found even under the door-keeper's nightcap—they would not have believed it: they would have shrugged their shoulders and declared that the man didn't know what he was talking about. They quickly added chapter to chapter of their book. Every step added to the memorable scenes of their love, to Orlout, to Quarantine, to the Luxembourg Gardens. On the Boulevard St. Michel they ran into a slightly drunken student who pointed his finger at them and cried, "Those two are lovers." They did not mind. They smiled. The student made part of the book. He became a question: "Do you remember that student on the Boulevard St. Michel?" It was the same with a big puppy on the Boulevard Montparnasse. It pretended to be a large watchdog, and barked at Andrew in a comical, babyish way.

They walked in step, arm in arm, apparently even breathing in unison. Sometimes they would stop talking in order to realize more fully their physical nearness. It seemed to them that they had grown together, that they had one heart, that the blood flowed freely from his hand to hers.

"Let's go slower. I'm tired," said Andrew. And Jeanne immediately felt that she too was tired. They had no separate feelings. They took no thought for the morrow. Separation was as unreal to them as death to a healthy man. Andrew mentioned Moscow, and it seemed to Jeanne that they were

on their way there. She walked with her eyes closed, giving herself up to Andrew's guidance and the rhythm of his measured steps. She was brought back to reality by a drunken shriek. Some "bully" was searching a woman for money and was trying to extract it from her stocking. They were in the Rue Thiboumery. Jeanne stopped.

"I'll go back with you," she said.

Andrew was troubled. Go back? Where to? He confessed then that he had nowhere to sleep. He would have to find some shabby little hotel where no one looks at your face or asks for your papers.

"All right, I'll go back with you."

They returned by the same streets. But the moments in the Rue Thiboumery overshadowed everything. They saw clearly that their parting was imminent, and that that parting was more real than their present companionship. They walked more slowly. They tried to talk about business, about money, when Andrew would return, but it was no use. They intentionally left their phrases unfinished. They wanted to deceive themselves. So long as those matters remained unsettled they could not separate. So it was better not to settle them. They could have walked like that all night. But at a street corner Andrew mechanically glanced at an individual who stood there freezing and said: "I'm a fool, I may walk straight into it."

Jeanne started. How was it that she had not thought of that before? She felt it was only natural that she should think for Andrew. Perturbed, she said, "Of course, we must not walk; but where is your hotel?"

"I don't know. There may be something near here. Yes, there's a signboard, do you see?"

They were in the Rue Odessa, at the back of the station. The grimy three-storied house at which Andrew was pointing was indeed a hotel. That fact was announced by a



signboard, "Rooms to let by the day." Few people stayed at the hotel by day, however. Now and again some inexperienced provincial from Brittany might put up there, but he soon fled. In the daytime the hotel was generally empty. The fat, red-haired proprietress usually slept or combed fleas out of her cat's coat. That was a favorite occupation of hers. In the daytime no one took any notice of the hotel. But at night it was the meeting place of the inhabitants of the neighborhood: of Gaîté, Vercingetorix, Odessa, and even of Thiboumery streets. At night the red-haired lady was awake and busy, letting guests in and out. There were eighteen rooms altogether. But what sorts and conditions of men and women had not been there? Prostitutes who made the Montparnasse station their beat would bring in new arrivals—Breton sailors, or little provincial clerks, acquainting them in that way with the elegancies of Paris. Girls from the Rue Thiboumery liked the hotel for its quiet decorum. It was never raided by the police. It was to this hotel the piano tuner, who had no piano, brought the butcher's wife to whom he was united by the ties of adultery. The lady of his heart came panting from two causes—obesity and love. Near the entrance bullies licked their lips at the thought of the earnings of their girls for whom they were waiting. Scandinavian artists from the Boulevard Montparnasse would sometimes hold nocturnal revels there, eager to get into touch with real vice. Unpleasant incidents did occasionally occur. In 1915 a Russian, probably a refugee, hanged himself in No. 9. And quite recently a girl smothered the sausage dealer from the Rue Duteau, took his gold watch, and got away with it. All sorts of things happened, but the hotel supplied a constant need, and so it continued to exist.

Reading the sign, Andrew said, "They won't want to see your papers here, so here let it be. What about the money?"

Where shall I write to you? We shan't see each other again."

Jeanne did not answer. She stood there silent. One of them would have to be the first to stretch out a hand. She stretched hers out, but she did not add the words, "Good-bye." She took Andrew's arm, and walked with him to the entrance. She said nothing; he asked nothing. The stairs were dark. "For an hour or for the night?" Madame asked from her little window.

Andrew received a key, and a bit of candle in a green copper candlestick. The red-haired lady crossed out No. 11 with a bit of chalk. No. 11 did not differ in any way from the other seventeen rooms. It was a dirty hole, and every inch of its stone floor testified to the walking up and down of murderer, adulteress, or tramp. But those two noticed nothing. The room was a magic cottage in which they could at last be alone together, where there were no tiresome street lamps, no inquisitive eyes, no suspicious followers, and on entering it, they smiled in friendly gratitude for its shelter. And the dirty room, as though abashed, answered smile with smile. For this purpose, it selected a small mirror over the washstand. The mirror smiled gently. The whole character of the room had altered in a moment. It could now vie with the Luxembourg Garden.

In the other seventeen rooms people were busy with their sordid, dirty affairs, hurrying, swearing, sweating. But there was happiness in this one room. The room knew it, and the mirror, besmeared though it was with splashes of soapy water, reflected the dim light tenderly. Andrew and Jeanne sat on the sofa, a horrible sofa which might have been a specimen from the torture chamber of the Nürnberg Museum.

They talked. Jeanne tenderly recalled Zaharkevitch with his funny ears. This time Perekop was not taken by twelve-inch guns, but by Jeanne's shining eyes, which shed their

warm soft light much as lighted windows shine out on the snow.

Andrew was glad. He realized the extent to which Jeanne had become a part of his life. He told her about the auburn-haired girl and how she had cried, "Courage." How good it was! It was like the fresh air. Jeanne had had so little air in her life.

"I want to go to Moscow, Andrew."

"Yes, later on, in the summer. But now for Toulon. I'm so glad that I'm going to get down to real work at last."

"What about me, Andrew? What am I to do?"

"You'll wait for me here. You're not alone. Your people are here."

Then, weakened by the darkness, by her fears, by the foreboding of separation, Jeanne could bear no more and turned away from him. No, she did not say anything, she did not confess that she had been lying, she did not make any complaint. She only turned away from him so that her eyes might be in shadow. That was enough to arouse all Andrew's suspicions. They were unkind to her. He could feel that that was so. The truth! The whole truth!

Jeanne gave in. She told Andrew about all her suffering, about all the indignities with which she had had to put up. It was not weakness. It was just faith, her great faith in her love. She was no longer afraid of inflicting wounds on Andrew; she felt that the air of that room, that damp, stuffy air, was so suffused with love that it would heal any wound in a minute. Jeanne told him everything, and even the walls of that hole, which had seen a few things in their time, were lost in amazement. When Andrew heard of M. Ney's persecutions he cried, "I'll crunch him like a snail."

Yes, Jeanne had told him everything; she had not even omitted the snails. She had led Andrew through the labyrinth of the loathsome office. But there was one thing about which

she had been silent: she had said nothing to Andrew of the man with the dreadful hands who wanted something from her; she had said nothing about the kiss in the study or about his attack on her that evening. Nor had she mentioned the incident of the stolen photograph. Why? She did not know herself. She had probably been moved by some instinct. She was afraid to say that name lest she should feel the damp, claw-like hands again on her shoulders. And so Andrew had heard nothing of the existence of the handsome Halibieff. What he had learned, however, was quite enough.

He paced the room savagely.

"Why on earth didn't you tell me before?"

He was losing his head. Jeanne's smiles were the only thing that saved him. For she kept on smiling like a child, in spite of the terrible things she was saying. Jeanne had not been mistaken. The wound was deep, but it was healing before her eyes. He was already finding a remedy. He had already found one. Jeanne must not go back. She must go away next day; it would be better for her to leave Paris. If she remained, her uncle might find her. But where should she go? Toulon was out of the question. If he were arrested, what would she do there alone? She was only a child. Why, she had actually searched Paris for a Soviet consul! The only thing to do was to return to Moscow, to Zaharkevitch. Zaharkevitch would fix it all up. Andrew would return. So it was all settled—to Moscow. Jeanne must go to Berlin next day. What about a visa? That did not matter. She could go to the occupied area, say to Wiesbaden. From there to Berlin. He would give her a note to the Soviet representative there. They would help her. So it was settled. To-morrow. And first to Wiesbaden. Jeanne listened, smiling gently. She did not really take in what Andrew was saying. She did not remember the names of the towns. What did that mat-

ter? Andrew would repeat it all, would tell her where and how all over again. She smiled, bewildered and excited by a new feeling: her love and her life were becoming one. Until that moment she had been living in two different worlds which were opposed to each other: life and love. Life had meant the Villa Ibragia, the Greek woman, snails, Gaston. Life had meant the damp, horrible hands of Halibieff. Love had been isolated from all that, a thing apart. But that love, which had had no roof to shelter it, that love which had hardly been embodied, was now, before Jeanne's eyes, beginning to behave normally and rationally, to get into trains, to look for rooms, just like a real person. Jeanne scarcely recognized it; but she did recognize it, and she smiled at it.

Then, suddenly, the smile was gone. She had grown sad. The big clock on the Montparnasse church was responsible for the change. It had rudely interfered by striking, its unexpected chime announcing that clocks did exist. Jeanne had realized that all those plans—Wiesbaden and Moscow—meant separation. She turned to Andrew like a little girl and pressed her face against his knees. Andrew gently raised her face and kissed the sad, dark eyes.

What happened next? How did their lips meet? How did they rise superior to the Montparnasse church clock? How happy these two beings in No. 11 were it would be impossible to say. They themselves were silent. Words? They could find no words, so how could a third person expect to find any? No, such things cannot be told. One can but use a trite and hackneyed expression: in No. 11 love reigned. No. 11 was full of that intense, silent heat which makes the corn ripen, which makes authors write books, which makes men and women live and die. Let carping critics turn up their noses on hearing of such things. What, associate love with a hotel in the Rue Odessa, a den of thieves and a house of assignations! Impossible! Love chooses other, more ether-



eal abodes. Let them even find Andrew and Jeanne blameworthy, and say that in such circumstances lovers should postpone loving. Let them judge. That is what they are judges for. Let the commandments condemn the lovers. They had not been married in church; they had not even been to a registry office. They dared to love simply because they loved. The law in its strictness was opposed to them.

The candle had long ago burned itself out. Andrew pulled up the blind, and gazed at Jeanne's face as the feeble rays of the gas lamps in the Rue Odessa lighted it. Jeanne's face was lighted by another light as well. Whence came that light at once so penetrating and so soft? Andrew did not know. He was too happy to know anything. He did not understand what had happened. He did not realize that Jeanne, having just given him her whole being, was irradiated by the infinite. But he did see the radiance in her face, and he dared not even touch her lips with his own. He held his breath, as though he were carrying a lighted match. He feared lest the light should go out. The street lamp might be extinguished. Andrew might even forget that night. But that light would never go out.

## XXVII

### *The Rats Worked*

M. RAYMOND NEY was just going to bed. He had broken his usual routine. It was nearly midnight, and his regular bedtime was ten, which was good for the health and saved gas. But it had been an exceptional day. M. Raymond Ney would long remember Wednesday, the sixth of March. It was a historic day. What thrills! The American's call, the revelations about Halibieff, the vain hunt for the diamond, the interview with that insolent Russian, the success of that genius, Gaston!

M. Raymond Ney visualized the still unwritten check. He felt that his safe was expanding with this unexpected accretion of capital, and he rejoiced over it as a loving husband rejoices when the ease of her life makes his wife put on weight. Half a million! No joke that! That was solid capital, damn it!

M. Ney even decided that he would buy a new pair of boots the next day. He had heard that the Samaritaine was the cheapest shop. He would go there. He had no desire to waste money. Other shops charged high prices—not for the goods, but for their name. Besides boots he would probably have to ruin himself on a blanket for Gabrielle. In the first place the moths had eaten her blanket; in the second place, he must spoil his daughter a bit or she would get ill. M. Raymond Ney loved his daughter. But it was time to go to bed now. He was in a good humor. Do you hear? He was in a good humor, damn it. He would have enjoyed a dozen snails.

There was only one thing that irritated M. Ney, that somewhat damped his joy, and that was a rat, a perfectly ordinary rat. There were a lot of rats in the office. Gaston was always suggesting that they should get a good cat, but M. Ney was afraid that it might steal his bacon. Cats always do steal. There was even a proverb to that effect. Nor did he want to spend money on a trap: the cheap ones were probably worthless, and the expensive ones—well, M. Raymond Ney's capital was all tied up. And so no one made war on the rats, and the rats, knowing it, did not stand on ceremony. They frightened Jeanne in the night by running across her feet. They did not disdain the snails which were always to be found in the kitchen cupboard. They gnawed the office papers and gave birth to hairless, squeaking ratlets in the heaps of torn-up letters. The rats irritated him to-night, although he had long been accustomed to a commotion under the boards. He was tired after his long day. There were nerves among the rolls of fat, whatever you may say about it. Thanks to the rats, he was threatened with a sleepless night.

They were robbing M. Raymond Ney. They were gnawing something. M. Raymond Ney did not know exactly what, but it was certainly something that belonged to him. Old crusts? Or the office books? The rats were noxious anarchists. He recalled Halibieff's words. What if he had been right? What if there were to be a revolution here? What if they should come and open his safe? No, that would be impossible. Still, it would be wiser to let Alfred sleep at the office. That girl was no protection. She wasn't in yet. Knocking about with men. He'd kick her out to-morrow. He had plenty of office girls without her. And how much she ate! Everybody robbed him.

M. Raymond Ney was feeling sad. If he had gone to bed an hour ago, he would not have heard the rats squeaking.

He was saved by the sudden ringing of the telephone bell. M. Raymond Ney started at the sound. Who could be ringing him up at midnight? It was not without trepidation that he took up the receiver. His fat immediately resolved itself into a happy smile. Really, how extraordinarily rich in events was this Wednesday, the sixth of March.

"Forgive me for troubling you so late."

M. Raymond Ney knew at once who was speaking to him. Indeed it would have been difficult to make any mistake. Who else could have turned the beautiful French language into such an incomprehensible bark? The deep bass of Mr. Jacks was hoarse on this occasion, and M. Raymond Ney had to ask him to repeat nearly every word.

"I have unexpectedly received a telegram. My boat, the *Romany*, leaves Havre to-morrow. I must therefore take the two-thirty night express to Havre. Will you allow me to come round to you at once for the diamond in spite of the lateness of the hour?"

"I am entirely at your service, M. Jacks. Of course, there is no one else in the office, but I will let you in myself. As for the outer gates, they are open day and night."

"All right. I'll be with you in half an hour. I am in a great hurry. I shall be obliged if you will have the stone ready so as not to detain me. Good-bye."

Mr. Jacks's voice had faded away. M. Raymond Ney had meant to ask him whether he had caught cold at the theater. Theaters were such drafty places, and Mr. Jacks had sounded so hoarse.

M. Raymond Ney did not put down the receiver at once. He held it to his ear for some time, listening to a dull murmur which sounded to him like a heavenly choir. It was as though someone were singing, "The check is approaching, roaching, oaching, check, check, check." The musical rolls of fat felt faint with bliss.

Then he took from the safe the diamond which Gaston's genius had recovered. Its sojourn in so unusual a place as a parrot's crop had in no wise affected the brilliancy of its glitter. Perhaps only Gabrielle's tears could be compared with that stone. But M. Raymond Ney had never noticed his daughter's tears. Those drops of water had not the slightest value, no one would give a single American dollar for them. Lost in admiration, he held the stone in the palm of his damp hand. After their musical emotions, the rolls of fat indulged in the contemplation of the seven colors of the rainbow. How exalted those rolls are, what heights of spirituality, nay, even of ecstasy, must a man be capable of reaching if he could be absorbed like that in the middle of the night!

M. Raymond Ney forgot the existence of the rats. He was happy. Such moments weaken a man. Little wonder that M. Raymond Ney wanted to fortify himself somewhat. He went into the kitchen and took a plate of snails from the cupboard. He carried it to the study, where he intended to await the arrival of Mr. Jacks, and began to eat. The snails were wonderful. Tonette, the servant girl, knew how to cook them to perfection: a modicum of garlic, and the flesh, not overcooked as in restaurants, but elastic and juicy. Like a happy lover M. Raymond Ney forgot everything in the world in the pleasure of masticating those incomparable snails. He did not even glance at the diamond which glittered in vain, he did not even listen for footsteps on the stairs.

He was roused from his blissful dreaminess by a persistent knocking at the front door. M. Raymond Ney started. The check! That was the thought in his mind: not "M. Jacks" but "the check." It was the check that had driven up in a car. Unfortunately, at that very moment, M. Ney was chewing a snail which was underdone and was



therefore tough, glutinous, like a piece of indiarubber. He did not want to spit it out, and he could not swallow it. Seizing a small lamp, he hastened through the labyrinth. He was afraid of annoying the American, who was in a hurry, in such a hurry as only an American can be. So he hastened through the labyrinth with the indiarubber snail still in his mouth, so that, instead of asking, "Who is there?" he only mumbled something through his nose. But the visitor understood. Mr. Jack's hoarse voice came from the other side of the door: "It's me. I've come as we agreed."

The snail therefore had to go down the gullet at last. But it refused to go down. M. Raymond Ney opened the door. Before he had time to glance at Mr. Jacks, the newcomer blew out the lamp. Then something strange happened. A predatory hand was at M. Ney's short throat. He swayed and crashed to the floor. Was it possible that Mr. Jacks knew jiu-jitsu? Or was it not Mr. Jacks but someone else? M. Raymond Ney lay motionless on the floor, the snail still in his mouth. The intruder then took a small claspknife from his pocket, and proceeded to cut M. Ney's throat as a butcher cuts a pig. The snail fell from his mouth, covered with thick red gravy. There was an awful gurgle, like the noise of a motor bicycle, and then stillness. After that, the nocturnal guest, the unknown guest—it was dark in the office—took a small electric torch from his pocket and examined M. Raymond Ney's body. The fat seemed to be swimming in red sauce. M. Raymond Ney had a great deal of blood, and as it poured out it threatened to cover the whole floor. This had been foreseen by the murderer, and it is to be assumed that in lighting his lamp in this fashion he was moved not by idle curiosity, but by a desire to avoid messing his brown spats. He carefully stepped over the ever-spreading pool of blood and walked with assurance into the intricacies of the labyrinth. His gait might have struck an observer

as odd: he walked first on tiptoe, and then as though lame. But there was no observer. Only the rats scurried about the empty office.

On reaching the study, the criminal again turned on his torch. He found the precious stone on the table without much difficulty and carelessly put it into his waistcoat pocket. Then he took off his outer coat, and thrust into it something that he had taken from a pocket inside his waistcoat. He did all this in a most leisurely way. It was obvious that he was in no hurry. It was very odd for a criminal to behave as he was doing. Instead of silently escaping, he began to make a noise. He knocked over a heavy armchair. At that the door which led to Gabrielle's room was opened. The murderer flashed the electric torch full on the girl. He was, indeed, a fearless murderer. He did not run away. He only repressed a sigh and held his breath.

"Father, what is the matter?" said Gabrielle.

There was a large table between the murderer and the blind girl. She sensed that she was in the presence of something terrifying. The murderer flapped the coat which he had taken off, so that a corner of it touched Gabrielle's face. The astonished girl grasped it and drew it toward herself. The coat resisted for a moment, then gave way and remained in her hands. The murderer was satisfied. He did not mind the loss of the coat. He started to run on tiptoe, barely breathing, and for some unknown reason hiding his hands in his pockets, as though the rats could have had any interest in his hands. He heard Gabrielle's desperate scream as he made his way through the dark courtyard. It did not disturb him. Who would pay any attention to a woman's screams at No. 17 Rue Thiboumery?

Gabrielle screamed only once, and that was when she had turned the last corner of the labyrinth and reached the door. Gabrielle realized that she was holding a strange

man's overcoat, and she had heard his soft retreating footsteps. She realized that her father was not in the study, and although she was still half asleep she concluded that thieves had broken into the office. She went toward it, calling to M. Raymond Ney. But the office was empty. Her foot suddenly began to slide. She bent down; there was something warm and sticky, but she did not understand what it was. She began to examine the floor with her hands, and they came into contact with her father's wet lips. It was then that she screamed; but her father was silent.

Gabrielle ran out to the stairs to call the neighbors, but there her strength failed her, and she fell senseless on the slippery landing. None of the neighbors stirred. They had been asleep for hours. The house was wrapped in silence. So was the office, in all its dark corners. The delighted rats emerged from their holes. There were great numbers of them. They scuttled in every direction in their search for food. Some went to the kitchen, where there was bread. Others made their way to the dark study and began to gnaw the remainder of M. Raymond Ney's snails. But the wisest of all turned out to be those rats that decided to investigate the labyrinth of the office where nothing but paper was usually to be found. They were rewarded a hundredfold for their modesty. They discovered fat, more fat than they had ever seen in all their rats' lives. They began to squeak with delight. Their teeth worked rapidly. No one hindered them. When the gray light of a dull dawn wearily penetrated the office the rats had nearly finished M. Raymond Ney's face.

## XXVIII

### *How Atlanta Cereal Is Advertised*

THE day was breaking. Andrew and Jeanne were standing at the window from which they could see the drowsy locomotives, the signal lights, the workaday sky already growing gray. They felt as though they were on a journey, as though that hotel room in the Rue Odessa were an express train flying along at great speed. Their short, quick breaths were indicative of the great rapidity with which they were moving. The disjointed words which they uttered seemed to be cast to the gray sky, like damp felt, or to the smoky, stuffy station opposite. The hands of the Montparnasse church clock were now crawling like snails. Could a clock, an ordinary clock with its exact mechanism, ever catch them up? Where were they rushing to? Where? Why, to Moscow, of course, to Andrew's Moscow. Andrew wanted to tell Jeanne something, something important. Yes, he remembered. It was such a ridiculous meeting. In October. Jeanne must remember it: that October; Moscow; Arbat Street; they were shooting. And all of a sudden that tiny consumptive hunchback; not a man, an insignificant beetle in spectacles. He could hardly speak. He was coughing and spitting blood, and shooting, shooting to kill. And he was whispering softly to himself, softly and tenderly, like a girl about her first love, like Jeanne. He was for the Soviets. His soul desired—what could that consumptive hunchback's soul desire? Bread, perhaps? Or something in the Bolshevik program? No, his soul desired "pure realization."

A funny phrase, wasn't it? Those ladies whom Jeanne had so naïvely stopped in the street would have seized upon it as the theme of a funny story. Aren't those Bolsheviks idiots? Probably it would not even have been printed in *The Trumpet*. What did he mean by a soul? The insect had most likely been reading too many religious books. The style was so artificial. But it was true, all the same. They died for that, simply for that. There had been books, many books. How many had Jules Lebeau possessed? But now it was to be "pure realization."

Andrew spoke explosively, in great agitation. He had faith in the Revolution now. He had lived it day after day: October, the machine gun in Arbat Street, victory, typhus, all the somber pathos of those years. From outside, where the rotund engines were panting, where the crutches of disabled soldiers sounded like drum taps, where Halibieff had listened to the Grieg suite in the Avenue Restaurant, and where they were now sweeping up his cigarette ends and his expectorations, Andrew felt the cold breath and heard the stealthy approach of one whose name, as in olden times the name of Jehovah, might not be pronounced.

Rising, Jeanne repeated: "Yes, yes, yes."

And the whole room, the miserable hole which was accustomed only to ribaldry, snores, and guttural cries, seemed now to be filled with the sound of approaching footsteps, with a cold blast, with the fierce light of struggle, bitterness—all the turmoil of victory.

They wanted to fly away from all that, to laugh, to shout, to plunge at once into the still, drowsy city, where the arrival of cartloads of vegetables, and the raising of bakery and dairy shutters, like heavy iron eyelids, were the first signs of awakening. Their feelings were identical, and without a spoken word they passed out of the room together. They were laughing as they went down the dark stairs. It



would be difficult to say why they were laughing. Perhaps they were gladdened by the dawn. Is not every self-respecting cock laughing his own cock's laugh as he greets the sun? In the darkness it took them some time to find the little window and the ever vigilant red-haired landlady.

"I do envy you," Andrew said to Jeanne. "In a fortnight you will be in Moscow."

Jeanne impulsively grasped his hand. At that instant she had heard someone breathing at her side.

They found the window at last. The red-haired landlady was of course at her post. Looking at the clock on the wall, she said in a businesslike tone: "Although you are going already, I shall have to charge you for the whole night. It's after four, and no one else will come now. And you've been here since ten."

They were glad that it was too dark for the red-haired lady to see them. They moved toward the door. But Andrew knocked against a woman who cried out. He apologized and lighted a match, which emitted a feeble light. How long does a match burn? A minute, or even less? Andrew noticed nothing but the woman and the door for which he was looking. But Jeanne had turned round. There was a man standing close to the window. And Jeanne shuddered on catching sight of that man. He had recognized her. He had heard the landlady's words, "You have been here since ten." It was the man who had stolen Andrew's letter. He had been shadowing them.

It was obvious that to the man as well this encounter was anything but agreeable. He covered his face with his hands, a futile maneuver. Jeanne might have been mistaken about the face, but no one could mistake those hands after having once seen them.

In the street Andrew noticed that Jeanne was frightened. "What has happened, Jeanne?"

Jeanne did not answer at once. She looked back. No, there was no one following them. Somewhat reassured, she said, "Nothing. It's really nothing. I simply saw a man with a horrid face, or rather, with horrid hands."

Andrew smiled lovingly. "How nervous you are. Be calm. Look at me now. You remember? Well, smile."

Jeanne obeyed. Jeanne remembered everything. Jeanne smiled. She thought no more of the terrible hands.

They rejoiced on their way at the earliness of the hour. It would be good to get up as early as this every day, before anyone else was about. Paris by the light of day, but without its daylight bustle, was quite different. It was a new Paris. The shops were closed, and the houses were simple, serious, and attractive. Without the shop windows they were like actresses without their make-up, in dressing gowns, nursing their babies. The houses were still in their dressing gowns.

And then the birds! There is nothing to interfere with their songs. It is, of course, difficult for a sparrow or even a blackbird to make itself heard above the noise of motor traffic. But now there are no motors, and the birds can sing to their hearts' content. It appears that there are a great many birds in Paris. It appears that there are also a great many trees in Paris. And they, too, can breathe freely. At this hour the town is filled, not with the smell of petrol or restaurant cooking oil, but with the scent of the sea. A light wind reminds the rare pedestrians that it is only a stone's throw from here to the sea. And the sea is so wonderful—such space, and there are so many lobsters in it.

They reached the principal market. There were plenty of people there. Under the clammy vaulted roof was to be found everything that the twenty police districts of Paris could swallow in one day. The wind had not misled the Parisians, the sea was near, and there were plenty of lobsters

in it. They lay here censoriously moving their military whiskers and staring with their detached eyes. The lobsters very much resembled some celebrated marshal—Joffre, or was it Foch? Near the lobsters lay all kinds of fish: eels, reminding one of shifty stock-exchange gamblers; brill, like rich women enveloped in fat, and heaps of inoffensive oysters. Close by, M. Raymond Ney's favorites, first-class snails, were dozing. Jeanne frowned involuntarily on seeing them. In the next row were vegetables. The sea is not the only thing near Paris. Carrots recalled the delicate hues of sunrise. Artichokes bristled and puffed themselves out. Pale green salads were there, bedewed and filled with the freshness of early dawn.

Saleswomen were drinking soup and warming chilly fingers over their steaming cups. No one asked Andrew or Jeanne to buy artichokes or lobsters. They probably did not look like serious marketers. But the saleswomen were all a-twitter as soon as they reached the flower stalls: "Violets, Parma violets, hyacinths, mimosa, snowdrops, anemones!" "Ten sous, twenty sous!" "Buy of me!" "No, of me!"

So you see, the twenty police districts of Paris are not satisfied with brill and beans. They must gobble up whole mountains of flowers every day. The flowers were pressed in large rectangular cases, they were sold wholesale. There were many different kinds of bright-hued, sweet-scented flowers. Orchids, creepy, complex, like arabesques invented by a decadent, were on sale singly. They would cool all day in the florists' windows of the Rue Royale and would be purchased in the evening by some gouty financier who wanted to prove to his mistress how elevated and refined a financier's feelings were. Flower women with mustaches and little hand barrows were buying the cheaper stuff—anemones or sweet peas—which they carried to the suburban quarters. They tied the flowers up in tiny bunches, because the poor also

love flowers; perhaps they alone love flowers. Who can say how many kisses have been born simply because the sweet peas really were sweet? These good flower women went even to the accursed Rue Thiboumery. The unqualified dispenser would sigh sentimentally when his squint eyes fell on the modest violets. That is not a romantic invention; it is true, and the whole street knows it: even the squint-eyed dispenser needs flowers, not to mention the piano tuner.

Andrew and Jeanne were overwhelmed when they reached the row given up to flowers. The heavy odors of hyacinths and mignonette took away their breath after the insufferable smell of fish and the sickly scent of animal carcasses. Among the many perfumes Andrew recognized one—bitterish yet sweet—which startled him and made him stop short. That was how the hotel room in Rue Odessa had smelt. No, that room had smelt of nothing unless of mustiness and mice. But there had been a moment when he was kissing Jeanne's shoulder, her slim, dark shoulder, when that perfume had assailed him. Wondering, he turned. Jeanne was holding out to him a spray which she had just bought from the flower seller. She offered it to him—mimosa, her favorite flower, dry and warm, and still slumberous with the Mediterranean sun that had nestled in its golden pellicules. And the more he smelt the spray, the more vividly did he relive those moments in the hotel room. Perhaps the moments had lasted an hour, perhaps two, or even three, hours. The hands of the Montparnasse church clock probably knew most about that. Andrew knew only that he had not kissed that shoulder enough. So it must have been a minute, a short minute. And Andrew was overcome by a childish desire to kiss Jeanne. Now, at once.

They came close to the little old church of St. Etienne. They went into it. They did not want to pray. They knew no more why they had entered the church than they knew

why they had strolled into the market to see whiskered lobsters. Except for a respectable shop woman who was kneeling in front of a stone statue of the Holy Virgin, the church was empty. She had been careful to choose a carpeted spot on which to kneel. That was not a sin, carpets are expensive, at least thirty francs a yard, and the Virgin liked to have things nice.

The stained glass was the color of copper and of apples. A warm light enveloped Jeanne. How pretty she was! One might fall on one's knees to her without putting down any carpet. Is it any wonder that Andrew could not resist the temptation and that he kissed her shoulder? The reminiscent fragrance reached him through the material, and the church seemed to turn into the hotel room in the Rue Odessa.

There was nothing in that to give offence to the church. Andrew had been happy in that room. It might possibly offend the respectable shopkeeper, who knew perfectly well that one goes to church to say one's rosary or to move one's lips solemnly, but not to kiss. But fortunately for her, the shopkeeper did not notice them. She herself was kissing something, but she was not transgressing any law—she was kissing cold, lifeless stone.

How happy they were as they left the old church! Paris was already awake, and its life was in full swing. People were hastening to work. But they smiled at this couple even in their haste. People really are not so bad as one might think from a perusal of Jules Lebeau's novels.

Jeanne wanted to say something particularly tender to Andrew. She had just opened her mouth, the unknown word was ready to fly out, and then something incomprehensible happened. Instead of tender words, Jeanne screamed, "I'm frightened, Andrew. I'm frightened, do you hear?"

On the brick wall in front of them was an enormous iron



hand, ready to clutch, to strangle, to destroy with its predatory claw-like fingers. Jeanne recognized that hand, and, staring at it, she repeated: "Andrew, I'm frightened. Don't you see it?"

"What's the matter? I can't see anything. That? That's only a poster."

Then Jeanne mustered courage enough to approach the terrible hand and read the inscription.

"It's shameful to be so nervous. It's simply an advertisement, a stupid advertisement about some cereal called 'Atlanta.'"

## XXIX

### *It Was in That Room*

OF COURSE Jeanne had not been mistaken. The man she had seen by the little window in the hotel in the Rue Odessa, covering his face with terrible hands which seemed to have come from the Atlanta cereal advertisement, was indeed Halibieff. Considering how virtuously he had supped at the Avenue Restaurant, this may seem surprising. Had it been worth while to eat a dainty chicken cutlet only to be found in the small hours of the night in a nasty hotel in the Rue Odessa and, moreover, in the company of a very vulgar woman? What can be the explanation of such conduct on the part of our irresponsible hero? And then, too, it was not a hundred yards from the Avenue in Montparnasse Square to the Rue Odessa. What had Halibieff been doing for three hours? That must remain a mystery; no one had seen him.

The old tramp Robert, a collector of cigarette ends and, when possible, of pocket handkerchiefs, was awakened by a noise soon after three in the morning. He had been sleeping near the cemetery wall in the Boulevard Edgar Quinet. No one could suggest that a street is a peaceful sleeping place, and least of all could it be said of the Boulevard Edgar Quinet, seeing that it is famous for its numerous stray cats. Heaven knows what they find to feed on or why they should have selected the Boulevard Edgar Quinet as their favorite meeting place. It was, however, a regular cat jungle and much frequented by the sportsmen who supply fifteen arrondissements of Paris with rabbit stew. Old Robert was, of course,

quite accustomed to the frantic mewing of the trapped cats. He had often seen people chasing the creatures. But he was puzzled by what he saw now. A tall man in an elegant suit but without an overcoat was running down the boulevard at full speed. He was followed by a brindled cat which mewed loudly. It was such a weird spectacle that old Robert spat before he turned over on his other side and went to sleep again. Why was the fearless Halibieff afraid of an ordinary cat? Why was the cat so attracted by Halibieff? And then again, what was Halibieff doing at such an unearthly hour in the Boulevard Edgar Quinet? He was not a tramp like old Robert. He had retained a room in the hotel in the Rue Mouton Duvernet. He had intended to go to Mentone. It was all very mysterious and inexplicable. This much, however, was certain: the mewing cat lost ground, and Halibieff, somewhat reassured, stopped at the corner of the Boulevard Raspail. He looked at his watch and calculated that he still had four hours and a quarter before his train went. So he had not been lying to Louis, he really meant to go away, if not to Mentone, then to some other place sufficiently distant from Paris.

Halibieff did not want to stay in the streets for more than four hours. He would probably get frozen without an overcoat; it was damp and by no means spring-like. But no. Halibieff did not notice the cold. It was merely that the elegant frequenter of the Avenue Restaurant was so well bred that he disliked attracting attention. And cats were not the only living beings in the streets; now and again he met a pedestrian who looked with curiosity at this odd midnight wanderer. He must protect his sensitive personality from those impudent glances at any cost. Of course, the simplest thing would be to go to the station and doze away the rest of this exhausting night in the refreshment room. But the station was full of light and people, and Halibieff was

nervous and suffering from a fear of men and of light. Add to that his ridiculous fear of cats, and it becomes clear that Halibieff was simply suffering from panic that night. He had been right when he had thought of a sanatorium. He really ought to rest and even to consult a doctor.

Meanwhile he was creeping along the Rue Delambre, trying to merge into the wall. And he nearly succeeded. His gray suit and his earthy complexion toned in with the shades of the Paris houses. Only his quick, restless hands would obtrude, fussing and wriggling like eels thrown on the sand. How was he to kill those four hours? Then the thought of a hotel of the right sort entered his mind. He thought of it with tender eagerness, mentally using the same expressions as Andrew: "They don't ask to see your papers or look at your face." But forthwith he felt dubious: "You can't go to that sort of place alone. It would look odd." He had better find some girl. With a girl, everything would be obvious. Her presence would, so to speak, be a voucher for his character. But where, at such an unusual hour, was he to find that girl to save him? Halibieff, however, did not have to cogitate very long. He caught sight of a hatless, heavily rouged creature at the corner of the street. In spite of her make-up it was obvious that she was at least forty years old, and it was only by a stretch of imagination that she could be called a girl. Her face was not only painted, it was so covered with pimples that it looked like yellow caviar. Her neck was a tell-tale, making it quite obvious that she very rarely washed. Halibieff was overcome by the smell of cheap spirits and dirty clothes. In a word, she was the stale, damaged, good-for-nothing stuff that is left on the stall at the end of the market. Such a creature had nothing to hope for early in the evening. She had to look out in the early hours of the morning for men who had drunk so much rum or Calvados that they did not care with whom they lay down.

He fully realized what he was picking up, but the exacting patron of the Gaverni Bar was not making any difficulties on this occasion. He was even indifferent to the color of her hair—she might have had red hair for all he cared.

As he had once whispered to Margot, so now he whispered to this woman, "Only be quick." The woman, who went by the name of Chichi, took her escort to the nearest hotel. It was the establishment of the red-haired lady in the Rue Odessa. Halibieff was glad of the dark. Chichi was glad for other reasons: this wretched den seemed very grand to her. She was accustomed to going with men to simpler places—to the cemetery wall in the Boulevard Edgar Quinet, for example.

But on the stairs of the hotel, near the window at which the red-haired lady was keeping watch, Halibieff went through some very unpleasant moments. The last thing he would have expected was a meeting with M. Ney's niece at a place of that sort. On hearing someone speaking Russian he pressed himself close to the wall to escape observation. Somebody said: "You will soon be in Moscow." But the voice was unknown to him. Then an accursed match was struck. Halibieff saw by Jeanne's face that she had recognized him. That shattered all Halibieff's plans, and his plans were many. It made him grind his teeth, as one does in a fever. But it was no use crying over spilt milk. The red-haired lady was speaking to him. And although it was dark on the stairs, Halibieff smiled in order to avoid suspicion.

No. 11, which had just parted from Andrew and Jeanne, received the new pair with resignation. Only the door gave a pitiful creak. It was hard on the poor room. After having seen nothing but nastiness and degradation all its life, it had on this night really imagined itself to be a fairy palace. It had seen happy lovers. Like Andrew, it had sensed the fragrance of that dark shoulder, the fragrance of the warm,



bitter mimosa. Now, as Halibieff and Chichi entered, the room remembered that it was a nasty, dirty hotel room to which people resorted for an hour to swear, snore, and cover the pillow with lecherous saliva. And remembering, the door gave vent to the room's mournful lament. Halibieff continued to tremble. Chichi, thinking that he was frozen, said: "There, I'm undressed, get in here. I'll warm you in a minute."

Chichi was even more terrible when undressed. Her dry pendulous breasts hung over her stomach. The rash which covered her shoulders was dazzling to the eyes. Halibieff answered in a troubled voice: "Directly, I'll sit here for a while."

Chichi began to curse: "What do you mean? What exactly did you bring me here for?"

Halibieff was trembling. He could not bring himself to lie down beside Chichi. He was not deterred by her personal defects. He could not have moved even if a certain brunette had been in her place. Who knows just what thoughts were passing through the mind of the gloomy man as he sat trembling on that chair? Whatever they may have been, he had no use for love-making. But Chichi was waiting. It was a very precarious situation. Then he had a brilliant idea. Ah, the diplomatic Pollux of Cherkessoff Lane would certainly have given it his approval.

"I can't just now, Pussy. You see my stomach aches; it is dreadful, it is unbearable." Saying which, he clutched his stomach and began to groan quite realistically.

Chichi yawned: "Well, if you can't, you can't." So much the less trouble for her. "Sit there if you like. If it gets better, you can come in here. Only give me five francs right away." Having hidden the note in her stocking, Chichi promptly went to sleep. Halibieff began to wash his hands in the rusty basin. He washed them carefully and for a long

time. Perhaps he was too particular about cleanliness. Then he sat down again on the chair. He was tormented by the most absurd ideas: suppose someone peeped at him through a chink in the door? He was sitting there fully dressed. It would look peculiar. And not wishing to part with his coat or waistcoat, Halibieff took off his trousers, remaining in his grass-green silk drawers. The twitching of his slightly rounded stomach was now noticeable.

There was a good deal of noise in the next room. No, the hotel in the Rue Odessa was certainly not a family establishment. For a moment Halibieff felt injured. They were obviously enjoying themselves in the next room, and here was he trembling with nervous strain and cold, not even daring to keep his trousers on. He recalled the brunette standing near the window, not with fear this time, but with lust. A cynical thought even evoked a snigger. But that lyrical outburst was quickly overcome by his former black thoughts, and Halibieff once more went to the washstand and plunged his hands into the water. This was not meticulous cleanliness, it was more like mania. His pointed fingers dabbled for a long while in the brownish basin. And at last the hands of the clock pointed to a satisfactory figure. The weary night was over.

Halibieff quietly left the room without disturbing Chichi's sleep. He was lucky: almost at the door of the hotel he found a taxi.

"To the Eastern Station, and be quick."

Halibieff sank back on the soft cushions, utterly worn out. But when the chauffeur started the car the engine gave a groan, just as though someone were throttling it. He started up. He covered his ears. The sound was more than he could bear.

### XXX

#### *Concerning a Pair of Hands and a Third*

THEY were in the Bois de Boulogne. They laughed like children. They ran like children. Jeanne found the first snow-drop. That was something worth finding. Andrew kissed Jeanne among the bushes. It would have been worth while to create the Bois de Boulogne just for that. Then they lunched at a little restaurant near the Porte Maillot. Its proprietor had funny ears, just like Zaharkevitch. While they were eating he kept on saying: "Well, isn't this stew good? Fit for a king. There's not another stew like it in all Paris."

Perhaps he was right. But that was not what they were thinking about. It was as though they were making a tour and had just reached a wonderful new town. On leaving the restaurant they gazed at the familiar scene with the curiosity of tourists. For some reason or other they bought a picture postcard which neither of them wanted. They stopped in front of a travel bureau window in which toy steamers were running over blue cardboard. They made friends with a bulldog, and he affectionately showed them the tip of his pink tongue. They did many other aimless things, and talked a great deal in a disjointed fashion. In fact, they behaved as all happy lovers behave, whether in Paris, or at Theodosia, or in the quiet Quarantine suburb.

A crowd had gathered outside a bank. They did not stop; they were not interested in the price of Mexican Eagles. The newspaper boys were shouting: "Sensational murder," but they did not buy a paper. There were no further sensations for them. They could not believe in murders just

then. They ignored even their chief enemies, the score of ironical clocks which they encountered on their way. They were not reckoning up the hours they had before the train started to Wiesbaden or Toulon.

They were roused from their blissful forgetfulness, not by the clocks but by a pair of sharp human eyes, ordinary reddish-brown eyes, which met Jeanne's eyes. Those attentive eyes were not in themselves alarming. But their glances recurred too often, oftener than the clocks. Jeanne at last noticed them, and they gave her pause.

"Do you see that man, Andrew? It seems to me that he is following us."

They turned into a side street. Reddish-brown Eyes also turned into it. Then Jeanne suddenly awoke to a realization of everything. She realized that Andrew might be arrested, that in a couple of hours they must separate for who knows how long. But she tried to be brave. She did not share her thoughts with Andrew. On the contrary, she went on joking: "Wasn't that woman like a kangaroo?" In a moment they would reach a square in which there would be swarms of people. There they would give Reddish-brown Eyes the slip. Jeanne smiled. But Andrew understood her from the desperation with which her hand clutched his. He was silent. Only his hand answered: I too am terrified, terrified at our parting. Hands can say so much!

The Place de la Madeleine was indeed crowded. They pushed into the thick of it. They did not know where Reddish-brown Eyes was, whether he had lost them or whether he was gliding by their side and would show himself again at that corner. They must hide in the most unexpected, because the safest, place. Jeanne had an idea. "This way, Andrew."

It was a fashionable dancing hall, My-Boy, in which elegant financiers gave themselves up to various rhythmic

movements between the hours of four and six when they had completed their operations with Mexican Eagles and other shares. This hall had all the attractions which had made the Gaverni Bar famous. It had its own Negro, a jazz band, and cocktails. It also had something rare and elevating, a good reputation. No, My-Boy was not a night bar where various Margots were to be found. It was, rather, an unsophisticated establishment or, if you prefer, a kindergarten. The most exacting mammas could take their anemic daughters there. And when the financiers shamelessly held those anemic young ladies in their arms, on the pretence that they were dancing a one-step, the mammas did not cry out, "What insolence!" but, on the contrary, showed approval by blinking their bovine eyes in time to the drum. Because it was all perfectly proper, so no one could have any fault to find with it: the young people were merely dancing.

After dancing, the perspiring young ladies ate cream cakes and thought: after all, it is the usual thing; I must get married as soon as possible. Meanwhile the mammas were weighing the pros and cons of the aspirants. The hearts of the owners of Mexican Eagles and such like stocks were priced daily from four to six on the exchange of My-Boy, and their prices reflected the prices which had been quoted on the Stock Exchange that morning.

Jeanne's idea was excellent. Who would ever dream of looking for a vulgar Communist in this society dancing hall? Reddish-brown Eyes was nowhere in sight. But how could one tell that his job had not been handed over to someone else? Perhaps there were other eyes, Black or Gray, moving about in the crowded hall? Jeanne and Andrew were decently dressed, but everyone was dancing.

"We must dance," Jeanne said. "But I don't know these dances."

Andrew had once been to a dancing place in the Rue



Gaîté with Pouatras. It had been great fun, because there had been neither financiers nor mammas there. And the jolly chauffeur had persuaded Andrew to dance. Andrew had proved apt, and by the end of the evening he was able to walk with a swing, to pause at the proper time, and to shuffle his feet in the approved fashion. Remembering that, he said bravely: "We shall get on somehow."

They danced. Perhaps their dancing was not bad, but it was quite different from that of the others. Perhaps they danced as people do in the bars of the Rue Gaîté but not in such dancing halls as My-Boy. However, no one looked at them. Everybody was busy with his own affairs: the financiers had to attend to cocktails and think about dow-eries; the mammas had shares on their minds; the daughters were conscious of a pleasant weakness in their knees. They danced. Jeanne must be brave. Everyone smiled as he danced, and Jeanne smiled. So no one noticed them. Smiling she whispered to Andrew, "In a few minutes we must part."

How she longed to embrace Andrew! Not as in a dance. No, simply to throw her arms round him and weep, to weep for a long time, till her pain was wept away. But she did nothing of the sort. She conscientiously did the dance steps. She smiled. The drum rattled while the financiers, rustling their lips as though they were shares, murmured: "How well you dance the shimmy!" and the mammas counted up francs and hearts aloud. There was no end to this long-drawn-out and ugly dance. Jeanne went on smiling.

She felt so alone, so deserted, so defenceless, as though this hall were the Rue Thiboumery. They were separating, and she could not cry out to the drum, to the financiers, to the whole world, "Stop! Be quiet! I am suffering, suffering to death." Even to Andrew she could say nothing except this, "in a few minutes."

And as she said it, Jeanne still smiled as though care free.

Look at her. That girl has no troubles. She dances at My-Boy, four to six.

When they came out onto the square again they rushed underground like mice. They decided to travel on the Metro, and, after passing a few stations, to emerge at some less frequented quarter and see whether Reddish-brown Eyes was still there.

There was a sickly smell of soap in the underground. The tiled walls shouted, "Drink Dubonnet," as though the life of man were destined solely to that end.

People were rushing to the stuffy trains like beasts in a forest fire. They swarmed round Jeanne and Andrew, pushing them with their dispatch cases, their parcels and bundles, their hats and their backs. Then they were separated, and Jeanne could not even say to Andrew, "I am still with you." She longed to say that and more. She wanted to add, "I shall always be with you." But other people were between them. They could not speak. So Jeanne smiled at Andrew. Irritated by the crush and their day's work, people looked at her crossly: What on earth is there to smile at? Life is not so amusing as all that. They little knew, those people who were standing so close to them.

Andrew and Jeanne got out at the Raspail Station, near the cemetery. The only other passenger who alighted with them was an old woman who quickly hobbled away to the exit. Reddish-brown Eyes was not there. Had he really been in the Avenue Kleber? Had not her sleepless night made Jeanne imagine the whole thing? They nevertheless decided that Andrew ought not to see her off. A station was a dangerous place; better say good-bye here. It may have been easy to make that decision, but it was more difficult to carry it out.

They faced each other silently as though they were unacquainted. They might have talked now. There were no

strangers near. But they were silent. And indeed, what was there to say? They were to part in a moment. Their whole past seemed to have shyly hidden itself behind a door, not daring to peep out and show itself with all its little joys and cares. Life felt that these two were not concerned with her at the moment. It seemed to them that they had already been parted. They looked at each other hungrily as one looks at the portraits of beloved friends whom one has long since left. At last Jeanne said, "I must go. My train leaves in an hour."

Jeanne said that. Jeanne must be strong. Andrew did not answer. His hand caught hers. And again they were silent. But what an agonizing, delirious conversation their two hands held. How they moaned, how they begged for mercy, how they writhed, mortally hurt, those poor human hands!

Jeanne's hand was the first to surrender: it withdrew from Andrew's broad palm, withdrew in despair, like a woman who is turned out of her own home. But it returned at once. Those hands, though powerless before the human will, yet made a long struggle. The last moments were the most terrible. The hands gripped convulsively, they held fast to each other. It was futile and cruel.

After having run as far as the corner, Jeanne returned. Her hand returned, returned to cry once more, "Save me." They gazed at each other. Their expressions recalled the grimace on Jules Lebeau's dead face, which had so frightened his housekeeper. Death was present. And then the hands dropped. They could not live unless together, and they were being separated by some third hand. Perhaps it was the terrible hand of the man who had stood near the window on the dark staircase of the hotel? Or was the iron hand intervening—had the iron hand come down from the poster advertising the cereal?

*Alas, It Is Not Typhus, Nor Is It Only Separation*

His carriage was empty, and Andrew was glad of it. The presence of strangers at that moment would have been intolerable. After having parted from Jeanne on the dark Boulevard Raspail, he had come to himself only when the train had carried her away toward the East. He felt that something irreparable had happened. He tried in vain to comfort himself with rational arguments: it would be only a short separation, Zaharkevitch would look after Jeanne, and in the summer Andrew would be in Moscow himself. But the feeling in his heart was not in harmony with those thoughts. It was mad, it was howling as a dog howls at night when it is on the trail of suspicious footprints. Andrew knew now that it was more than a mere separation. He longed to cast everything aside, to make his way to the Eastern and not to the Lyons Railway Station, and to follow Jeanne by the first possible train. It was not by common sense that the mad heart was overruled, but by will power, the will power of a man who for six years had known no other law than the Revolution. He had obtained money for his work. He must go to Toulon. He must—and that was the end of it. He might toss about all night, he might even weep. But by daylight he must be at his post. It was clearly inexorable. One could not dispute it. He calmly took his ticket and, just as calmly, he went through the whole length of the train in search of an empty compartment. He did

everything that was necessary. If it had been necessary to make a propaganda speech he would have done it.

He thought of his fellow workers. Perhaps they too were unhappy. Perhaps Zaharkevitch, funny, bat-eared Zaharkevitch, wept at night because he was separated from his beloved. Who could say? But they did their work, and so must Andrew. He was going to Toulon, and his going was due neither to bravado nor to pose. He was going just as the Montparnasse clock was ticking, just as the blackbirds whistled in the Luxembourg Garden. All those things were as inexorable as a railway time-table. He was going to Toulon, just as Express Train No. 43 started, at exactly twelve minutes past nine. After having looked round the station, Andrew had decided that there was no cause for alarm. He had eluded that spy cleverly. But he would have to be careful at Toulon. True, he was not traveling to Toulon; he had booked to Grasse. And as everyone knows, Grasse has a famous perfume factory, and Cislav, the Latvian commercial traveler, had the best of references.

There was certainly nothing about Andrew's appearance likely to rouse suspicion. A loose English overcoat, a traveling cap, a small suitcase, all denoted the well-to-do traveler who is accustomed to frequent journeys. He did not begin to fuss at sight of the station clock. There were no ladies with lace handkerchiefs to see him off. He might well be a commercial traveler, or a care-free young bachelor on his way to Monte Carlo, where he would fling a thousand or two on the green cloth. It would have been difficult to imagine him as associated with sailors or a secret printing press. He lazily glanced round, and bought a comic paper from the newsboy. An ordinary second-class passenger.

The guard was slamming the doors. At the last moment a belated traveler rushed up to the door of Andrew's carriage. He gave Andrew a good look and was evidently satis-



fied by what he saw; a pleasant companion is a great boon on a long journey. But while he was examining Andrew the train gave a jolt and started. The man had no alternative but to jump into another carriage of the moving train. When the train had started Andrew did not look at the amusing cartoons which he had bought. Knowing that he was alone in this well-lighted box, scudding across the flat fields, he threw off his self-restraint. He gave his heart full freedom. He no longer wore the air of a care-free young bachelor. He did not weep, it is true, he did not know how to weep. Jeanne had been wise in never having let him see her tears. They would have frightened him. Andrew had no tears. But it was difficult for him to breathe, as though someone had stuffed a bit of wadding into his throat. He lowered the window. His head was aching. His heart was beating irregularly. He moved restlessly about the carriage. He was suffering. He felt as though he were sickening for another attack of typhus. But it was not typhus. It was only the parting. His cheeks seemed suddenly gaunt. Sorrow and sleeplessness had made deep, dark rings under his eyes. When his headache made him close his eyes and frown, he looked quite a middle-aged man. A sad, weary man, who looked at least forty was now sitting in the compartment. He took off his cap, and unfastened his collar, but that brought him no relief.

The railway carriage creaked and rocked, and should have rocked him to sleep, for railway carriages are used to soothing the forlorn, homeless folk who travel about the world in pursuit of happiness. Like old nurses, they lull such passengers with their hoarse muttering, "Now, by-bye; now, by-bye." Perhaps that monotonous "by-bye" helps some people; for there is something soothing in it, and if once they find it so, there is nothing more to be said about

it. You have left one town, and to-morrow you will be in another. Meanwhile, the best thing to do is to go to sleep. And the passenger rapidly drops off. All railway carriages know how to do it, and Andrew's carriage was no worse than others. It muttered something, but though Andrew listened to its mutterings, they brought him no comfort. Every bar of that ridiculous cradle-song seemed to say the same thing: "Jeanne is farther and farther away."

Andrew clearly visualized another train which was snaking through dark fields. It was carrying her away. Those two trains seemed to have planned it all beforehand. It was impossible to stop them. There was, of course, an alarm cord in the compartment, and if you pulled it the train would stop. But only a child regards its own suffering as a catastrophe, and Andrew was a grown-up man. He knew that one can live and that one can carry on a secret printing press in spite of suffering. Andrew was going to Toulon.

The wadding in his throat was getting harder. Andrew could hardly breathe; he put his head out of the window. From time to time it was all dark and silent. There was a damp, bog-like smell. At times golden sparks, flashing before his eyes, lighted up the dark night, and the express considerably slackened its speed so that one could see windows with round lamps and the silhouettes of peaceful citizens preparing for their comfortable beds. In the small stations soldiers were dozing, and the refreshment room lights were dim. The porter on duty yawned. It was a slow, peaceful life, but it looked like a film thrown on the screen by a drunken operator who was winding the reel with absurd rapidity.

The motion, the lights, the smoke, made Andrew feel worse. His head was a leaden weight, and he could hardly get back to the cushioned seat. He lay down. Once or twice

people peered in from the corridor. Somebody was probably looking for a seat, but on seeing the passenger's drawn and anguished face, he would refrain from entering. Only the waiter from the restaurant car opened the door and politely asked Andrew whether he wanted anything. Andrew ordered a cup of black coffee. Perhaps it would drive away his headache. But he pushed it aside in disgust when he had tasted it. He thought that it smelt of petrol. An unreasoning wave of squeamishness swept over him, the smell of the smoke-soaked cushions nauseated him.

He was thinking of Jeanne. He remembered how frightened she had been when she had seen the poster opposite the St. Etienne church. What had there been on that poster? Yes, he remembered, it had been a sharp iron hand. Jeanne's terror had seemed ridiculous at the time. He had been unable to see anything terrifying in an ordinary advertisement. But now the memory of that hand made him shudder. What if a hand like that should seize you, stop your mouth, grip your neck? How strangely his neck hurt—he must have twisted it somehow.

He was falling asleep. The train had succeeded in rocking him to sleep. But in his dreams the hand did not disappear; on the contrary, it became a live hand, it began to walk about the station, to shadow Andrew. He wanted to get up to rid himself of it, but he could not. He went on sleeping. Now the hand was reading his comic paper, laughing. The laugh clanged like metal. Then the hand began to worry Andrew again. It caught his elbows in its claws. Andrew sprang up. There was a man standing over him, roughly dragging him by the hand. Still half asleep, his mind dulled by the dark and the noise, Andrew could not understand anything, but he made for the door. It was guarded by a station gendarme. He seized Andrew. It was only then that Andrew realized he had been caught. The train had drawn up in some big

station. It was Chalon-sur-Saône, the first stop after Paris. Andrew heard somebody in the next compartment say, "There are two Chalons, my child; one on the Saône, the other on the Marne."

People were calling porters. Oranges were being offered for sale. The man who had awakened Andrew took a small pair of handcuffs from his pocket. Deftly and swiftly he clapped them on Andrew's wrists and shut them with a snap. Then the police led him to a small room next to the station telegraph office. They did not say a word. Andrew felt very ill. Short detached thoughts fluttered through his heavy head, one more terrible than the other. How stupid! He had nearly reached his destination. The eighty thousand were lost. It was wicked. Now they would shut him up for a long time. Would they connect him with the Pouatras case? And Jeanne? What would happen to Jeanne? That was the man who had looked in at his window. He was Cislav. He was going to Grasse. Nonsense; they did not know! Then why all this pomp and ceremony? What did the handcuffs mean? How good it would be to go to sleep again.

He tried to sleep in his chair. But they would not let him. A crowd of idlers gathered at the window. There were soldiers and workmen and respectable shopkeepers, and even a red-faced village priest. They all looked at him through the window as though both angry and afraid. The gendarme was explaining something to them in a whisper. A lady with a large bird in her hat tapped the window with her umbrella and squeaked: "I can understand a man complaining if he is hard up; but stealing and murdering! What beasts there are in the world!"

Then the priest, smiling as he might smile if he were offered a mug of cold cider on a hot July day, said good-naturedly: "They will tickle his neck for that."

Andrew smiled with contempt. Did you ever hear any-

thing like it? There was still a town called Chalon-sur-Saône where they believed that Communists were thieves and murderers. But the priest's remark nevertheless filled him with foreboding. It was too reminiscent of his recent dream. He put his hands to his neck. It hurt; he must have ricked it or got in a draught when he had stood at the window.

Little by little the crowd dispersed. It was late, and the onlookers were hurrying off to their cosy rooms with round lamps and warm beds. Andrew stared dully at the portrait of a general who had long whiskers and wore a kepi. He thought drowsily: How old is that general? Has he got freckles? He doesn't seem to have a neck, so they could not tickle his.

At last a gendarme entered the room: "Come along."

"But tell me why I am arrested?"

"They'll tell you there."

"Where?"

"Where we are taking you."

Andrew was once more in a train. Once more the well-lighted box rushed through the empty fields. But now there was somebody on either side of him: the plain-clothes man who had arrested him, and a man in police uniform. They watched his every movement closely, while carrying on a somewhat trivial discussion of some revue at the Clichy theater. The plain-clothes man kept on repeating the same phrase: "When she says, 'Mew,' it is extraordinarily witty."

They did not talk to Andrew. He could sit there quietly and think. He tried to imagine his preliminary examination. It would be a bad business if his affair were connected with Pouatras. In that event he would refuse to speak. If not, he must deny everything. There were no clues. They had found nothing on him but his passport and his money. Of course, they could make inquiries at Riga. Well, it didn't matter. The worst that could happen would be a few months



for carrying fraudulent documents. The money—how was he to get the money back? If he could make them believe that he was Cislav they would return it. A commercial traveler. Grasse. References. Big purchases. On the whole Andrew felt consoled. The situation was not so serious as he had at first imagined, before he had been fully awake. It looked as though he would get off. But he would have to be wary during the examination.

They reached Paris early in the morning. There was a prison van waiting at the station. Andrew was put into a small, windowless compartment. He heard the rattle of the wheels, but he could not see where they were taking him. Probably to the Prefecture. Even when the doors were opened, so that his eyes were half blinded by the light, he could not tell where he was. He was first led through a large courtyard where there were flower beds, then along newly painted passages. Their smell and color reminded him of a hospital.

He found himself at last in a comfortable, light study. There was a tall, thin man sitting at a table. His freshly shaved face wore an expression of extreme skepticism. This was the examining magistrate, Elie Renaud. His appearance did not belie him. He had indeed only just shaved, as he shaved every morning, pressing hot towels to his sensitive skin after the actual shaving was done, and then, slowly and methodically, rubbing in a face cream. Also, he was a skeptic; he believed in nothing unless it were the face cream, and he had an utter contempt for life. In the very first years of his service he had been very keen on his work and had shown a certain amount of enthusiasm. He liked to stir up men's souls. He considered himself a fine psychologist, and liked to boast to his colleagues at supper that he remained in the service solely because he intended some day to write a great analytical novel in the style of Stendhal.

But after a short time his work had bored him. The cases were dreary and unutterably alike. M. Elie Renaud had come to the conclusion that the human soul was not worth studying. He nevertheless continued to do his work conscientiously. It was a kind of sport. When he caught a witness contradicting his own evidence, he felt the satisfaction that a jockey feels on taking a difficult fence. That was why he was considered one of the best magistrates in Paris.

Andrew did not know this. Collecting all his presence of mind, he dropped carelessly into a chair, saying, "You have a strange way of doing things here. Without rhyme or reason you seize a foreigner, an honest business man, you put these bracelets on his wrists—excuse me, but I can't understand what it is all about."

M. Elie Renaud made no answer. Languidly picking up a pen, without looking at Andrew, he asked in a bored tone, just as day after day he had asked hundreds of others: "Your surname? Your Christian name? Where were you born? When?"

Andrew replied calmly.

"You are a Lithuanian?"

"No, Latvian. You have probably got mixed. No wonder; at present there are so many——"

The examining magistrate politely interrupted him: "So, you affirm that you are not a Lithuanian?"

A thought flashed through Andrew's mind: Was it possible that they knew about Batatitisse? But he did not give himself away and answered firmly, "Yes, I come from Riga."

"Of course you speak Russian?"

"A little."

"Be so kind as to sign your name in Russian. Here, this piece of paper will do."

M. Elie Renaud examined the signature carefully and then compared it with something.

"Tell me, M. Cislav, what were you doing on the night from Wednesday to Thursday—that is, yesterday?"

"I? I was at a little pub. And afterward—afterward I went to a low hotel."

"Where exactly is it? Were you alone or with friends?"

"I can't remember. I"—here Andrew even tried to laugh lightly—"am not used to your delicious wine. I was somewhere in Montmartre. A girl took me there—a small, fair-haired girl with a mole on her cheek. But as to who she was . . . You know yourself that one does not ask a girl of that sort to show one her passport. Perhaps she has got mixed up in some theft and you want to question me as a witness? But I really don't remember anything. I was very drunk. Evidently this is all a misunderstanding. I must ask you to release me. I must go to Grasse. As it is, I have lost a day."

M. Elie Renaud turned his eyes away as though he were not looking at Andrew, though he was in fact watching for the least quiver of an eyelash. He said with feigned carelessness:

"And so, M. Cislav, you say that you cannot remember where that house of joy is in which you passed the night? Allow me to jog your memory. Is it not in the Rue Thiboumery?"

On hearing the word "Thiboumery" Andrew lost control of himself. He sprang from his chair. He thought that they had arrested Jeanne.

With manifest satisfaction, M. Elie Renaud stroked his soft, becreamed and scented chin. With a touch of irony in his voice, he said, "Don't get agitated, M. Cislav. Sit down."

He had once more scored a point. Really, people were too primitive. They were not worth writing about in the style of Stendhal. A magistrate's report was quite enough for

them. M. Elie Renaud put his signature to some official form and deliberately and with maddening slowness pronounced these words: "You are charged with the premeditated murder of M. Raymond Ney, the director of a detective bureau, with intent to commit larceny."

## XXXII

### *Jeanne Finds a Champion*

GASTON had had a wearing day. He hadn't even had an opportunity for the full enjoyment of his triumph of the day before. When he went to a neighboring café in the early morning to drink the first of his three daily aperitives, but chiefly with the intention of boasting to the landlord of his find, his poor, bald head had been stunned by the most extraordinary news. He had not been in the least prepared for it. Peacefully drinking his vermouth, he was for the thousandth time telling some casual customers about his wonderful flair. Feather beds and ashes from the fireplace had not been enough for him. He was no simple-minded police agent from the Prefecture. He was a private detective. That really meant something. He was the spiritual son of Pinkerton. His instinct had led him to smell out the diamond. He had searched the parrot's crop. That was what he had done!

His listeners blinked. One of them cried enthusiastically, "Yes, you have some nose!" And then, glancing at Gaston's face, he hastily corrected himself: "I mean to say, you have a brilliant mind. Like Poincaré."

The day therefore had begun as an idyl. But a quarter of an hour later—even before Gaston had had time to finish his vermouth, his ailing but very energetic wife had come running to the café with the nerve-shattering news.

When he had reached the Rue Thiboumery he had heard



further details: that the rats had gnawed away the late director's nose; that Gabrielle was suffering from a nervous breakdown and would answer no questions; and finally, that Mr. Jacks had come for his diamond, and was at that moment sitting in the study. Gaston had not been worried by the first two items of news. A dead man's face was not worth anything anyhow. And it would be a good thing, on the whole, if Gabrielle kept silent. What could one expect from the blind fool? But Mr. Jacks—that was no laughing matter.

And Rotten-nose, who on hearing of M. Raymond Ney's death had at once felt himself to be captain of the ship—that is to say, the real head of the bureau—went boldly to the study to appease the American. It was no easy matter. Mr. Jacks had come for his diamond. The episodes of the night were no concern of his. Gaston must set about finding the thief at once—otherwise . . . What the "otherwise" implied, Gaston never learned. But he did understand that he must do something. Standing in the late director's place, he thundered as M. Raymond Ney had been wont to thunder on solemn occasions.

"We will find him. Our bureau is the best in Paris. We will recover your diamond even if it ruins us." Gaston had no rolls of fat. He was even bereft of an ordinary nose. Nature had been unkind to him as compared to M. Raymond Ney. But the spirit of man is great inasmuch as it can make good the omissions of nature. Notwithstanding the above-mentioned defects, Gaston at that moment bore a close resemblance to M. Raymond Ney. Mr. Jacks therefore went away full of hope. Peace therefore was restored in the complicated labyrinth, and the detectives settled down to their ordinary routine. The death of the master was a sad thing, of course, but it would be silly to waste a working day. It would mean a loss of about two thousand francs. Rolls-of-

fat, innocent victim of murder, was now gently flapping his angel wings as he flew through the ether. But if he could have heard what Gaston said it would certainly have given him pleasure. His spirit still dominated the office in all its dark corners. By midday Rotten-nose had definitely assumed his new rôle. He even reprimanded Alfred sharply when the latter suggested that they should close the bureau at noon as a token of mourning.

"We can't afford it. All our capital is tied up."

He said "we" instead of "I" only from a sense of modesty, and what was the exact significance of "we" remained unexplained. Did it, with Gaston, include Gabrielle, whatever the rats had left of the late director, or pimply faced Alfred? But it would be a mistake to suppose that Gaston's mind was at ease. He was burdened by all sorts of doubts. He remembered his late master's gracious promise. Before God and man he had the right to consider himself the secret fiancé and, when his wife had died, the husband of his master's daughter. He gazed tenderly at the sacred safe on which even the impudent thief had not dared lay his hands. But affairs of that kind required discreet management, with no unnecessary witnesses. It was a very good thing that the blind girl was lying unconscious, like a dead cat. But the niece? She had a head on her shoulders. You couldn't silence her. She might go to the lawyers. She might put Gabrielle up to some nasty trick. He must get rid of the niece. But how?

Fate came to Gaston's assistance. It came in the guise of a messenger boy in a red cap. Although the letter which he brought was addressed to M. Raymond Ney, Gaston opened it without hesitation. The dead cannot read. Jeanne informed her uncle that henceforth he would be spared the trouble of supporting his penniless niece. She was leaving at once for Moscow, where she would join old friends. Gaston laughed

with delight as he read. Moscow was a long way off. He really had been born under a lucky star.

Jeanne had written this note in the morning, soon after she and Andrew had visited the church of St. Etienne. She had therefore written it on Thursday, the seventh, but she had dated it Wednesday. The sleepless night in the hotel in the Rue Odessa had not, in her mind, divided the two days. It had seemed to her to be still the wonderful day on which she had met Andrew on the Quay.

For a moment Gaston entertained a suspicion that the girl might have had something to do with the murder. In that case he might denounce her, and so make sure of his own security. But perhaps she had really left Paris the day before. Gaston had heard M. Raymond Ney shouting, "Get out!" It was quite possible that after that she had decided to leave. The note had been written yesterday. If Gaston informed against her he might easily trap himself. The niece might turn out to be as innocent as a lamb, and the whole affair would get noised abroad. Lawyers would take possession of the inheritance. Guardians would be appointed for Gabrielle. Better keep the whole thing quiet. Moscow was a long way off, not like Lyons. She would stay there for at least a year, and by that time it was to be hoped his wife would have died and his affair with Gabrielle have been legally arranged. Then he would have nothing to fear, Jeanne or no Jeanne.

Having reached that point, Gaston went to Gabrielle's room. The blind girl was lying quietly on her bed. Gaston spoke to her, but she did not reply. Then, closing the door, he went up to her, shook her by the shoulder, and whispered in his nasal voice, "You've played the fool long enough. I take your father's place now. Before he died he ordered me to marry you. So there!"

Rotten-nose felt that his voice lacked authority. He de-

cided to use stronger language: "I won't beat you; but not a word to anyone. Hold your tongue, do you hear? Hold your tongue till we are married. And don't you so much as mention that Jeanne. Otherwise you'll pay for it. Otherwise—" Gaston bent over the blind girl and whispered in her ear—"otherwise I'll strangle you."

At that Gabrielle gave a little cry. Gaston considered that the first lesson had lasted long enough. He returned to the study and rang up Dr. Lenier, who was treating his wife.

"Forgive me for troubling you, Doctor; but I should like to know how matters stand with my wife. . . . No, no, I am not upset; you can speak quite frankly. I am prepared. I simply must know, is she going to die soon? . . . Thank you, Doctor. Please regard this conversation as a visit."

What a gesture! M. Raymond Ney would have rebuked him for such extravagance. But in such joyful circumstances, the inheritor of the magnificent safe might surely allow himself that luxury.

An hour later, M. Elie Renaud arrived at the bureau to examine the scene of the crime. When he questioned Gaston, Rotten-nose did everything in his power to justify his late master's confidence in him. He showed proper grief. His replies were clear and sensible. He even touched the skeptical heart of M. Elie Renaud. He confirmed the statement that the blind girl had been most sensitive and delicate from her childhood, that she suffered frequently from nervous derangements which caused loss of memory and speech. He honorably cleared the maid Tonette from all suspicion by testifying that she never slept at the office. When the examining magistrate asked whether there was no one else who remained in the apartment overnight Gaston replied:

"A niece of the late director formerly lived here. But she left yesterday to join some relatives abroad." And fearing

that this might not appear to be enough, he added, "She is a very nice girl. She was very fond of her uncle. She went away early in the evening. I saw her off myself."

Rotten-nose was tenderly attached to his poor master's family. Rotten-nose had exculpated Jeanne.



### XXXIII

#### *During the Smoking of a Cigar*

WHEN Gaston heard that the murderer had been arrested he allowed Gabrielle to recover somewhat from her nervous breakdown. She was, however, still forbidden to mention Jeanne or to speak of Gaston's ardent desire to be united to herself as soon as possible by the tender ties of matrimony. The blind girl's evidence was not lengthy but it was extremely important. Its main significance lay in the incident with the coat. The idea that the pocketbook had been put there intentionally was completely abandoned after Gabrielle's story. After comparing the photograph and the letter, M. Elie Renaud had been convinced of Andrew's guilt, and his opinion had been confirmed by the prisoner's ridiculous behavior and the agitation that he had shown at the mention of the Rue Thiboumery. He warmly congratulated M. Boty, the head of the Criminal Investigation Department. It was no small success. The manner in which the crime had been committed had shown that it was not the work of a novice but of an experienced professional hand.

M. Boty answered modestly, "It is a triumph for the criminal police over the political police. Can you believe it, M. Renaud, when I tell you that those infants took him for an anarchist? Moreover, they spent a fortnight running after him with their tongues hanging out, and yet they were unable to catch him. The last time their agent saw him he

was in the company of some girl in the Avenue Kleber. It was at four o'clock on Thursday, that is, after the murder, and still he managed to elude their agent. But the moment the affair was put into our hands we got him by that single phrase, 'I am leaving to-morrow.' And yet, notwithstanding all that, the Parliamentary Committee is cutting us down and granting them further credits."

"You are quite right," agreed M. Renaud. "I am surprised at the attitude of the committee on that point. I presume that in view of the approaching election campaign it is thought best to avoid political cases. Any hubbub would strengthen the hands of the opponents of the 'National Block.'"

When the head of the C. I. D. had gone, M. Elie Renaud made the following note in his pocketbook: "Four. Kleber. Girl." He then lighted a black Mexican cigar and devoted himself to consideration of the evidence. As a matter of fact, there was nothing to consider, the whole affair had turned out to be simple, too confoundedly simple. He had not even had the sport of encountering any pleasant obstacles in this case. Every criminal declares that he was dead drunk at the precise hour when the crime was perpetrated. Dull!

M. Elie Renaud gazed at his cigar, which was fast turning to silvery ash. The sight of the cigar induced philosophical reflections in M. Renaud's mind. The man would, of course, be executed. He was living the last few weeks of his life. He was, so to speak, turning into ashes before M. Elie Renaud's eyes, like this cigar. But was not M. Elie Renaud's own life burning itself out in exactly the same way? Of course he was not threatened by the guillotine. He would die quietly in his bed, surrounded by nurses, by every comfort. He would die of sclerosis or some other disease. Still, he would die. And then—but what did all the rest matter? In five years, well, make it ten if you like. There were prisoners

who would go on giving more and more evidence, even if it told against them, in order to postpone the day of their trial. Pitiful tricks! Life was a sorry business! And M. Elie Renaud sighed. His cigar ash fell on his knees. But that did not disturb his lofty thoughts.

During that time Andrew was in solitary confinement. He was not watching cigar ash, nor was he thinking of the vanity of life. He tore up and down his cell like a newly trapped wolf cub. He could not regain his composure. What had happened? Who had invented all this? The examining magistrate's words had been an absurd dream. He had been inclined to laugh at them. He, Andrew, had robbed someone? It was so obviously preposterous that it would surely be cleared up. It would be cleared up this very day. On the whole, perhaps it was all for the best. They did not suspect him of being a Communist. As soon as all that nonsense about the murder had been settled he would be released and his money would be returned. It was better than if they had arrested him as a Communist.

Yes, but there was something alarming, a semblance of truth, in that absurd dream. Jeanne's uncle, the Rue Thiboumery could not be a mere coincidence. Was it possible that Jeanne had been arrested? Suppose that in trying to defend herself against that blackguard she had really killed him? But when could she have done it? She had been going straight to the station. Perhaps she had gone back to fetch her things? These were the thoughts that made Andrew rush up and down his long, narrow cell till he was well-nigh beside himself. The main thing was, where was Jeanne? What had happened to her? Andrew was not indulging in philosophical reflections, like M. Elie Renaud. He was overwhelmed by simple human fears.

At last M. Elie Renaud rang his bell. He lighted a fresh cigar. He was inclined to admire himself: his impartiality,

his alertness during examinations, the aristocratic manner in which he held his long cigar between two fingers, and the way in which he smoked it very slowly but without allowing it go out.

"And so," he said gently, almost sympathetically, "you deny your guilt?"

The study was light and comfortable. On the table was a letter weight in the form of a naiad. When, on entering, Andrew saw all this, saw a well-bred man in a blue suit instead of a mute warder, he calmed down at once. It was only in a madhouse that he could be condemned. Everything here spoke of a normal life, of normal people who were ready to listen to him, to understand him. In answer to the question, he had smiled, not provocatively, but simply, kindly. Jeanne loved that smile.

"No, I am not guilty. It seems absurd even to have to say it. Surely you can see for yourself. I cannot imagine how it is that an innocent person can be accused of murder."

"Very well, then perhaps you will now tell me what you were doing on the night of Wednesday to Thursday? I must tell you that what you said about being drunk and going to a low hotel does not carry conviction."

Andrew said quietly and trustfully, "No, I cannot tell you that. It has nothing to do with this affair. It concerns only my private life."

A barely perceptible smile, tinged with irony, passed over the magistrate's face. The criminal was obstinate. He was determined to play the mouse, seeking up to the last moment for a crack in the floor. Well, in that case, M. Elie Renaud would have to be the cat. He did not mind playing that rôle for a while.

"So you persist? I am very sorry. I shall have to speak for you. I shall have to be indiscreet. I shall have to tell you some of the episodes of your life. You declare that you are a

Latvian, and as a matter of fact you were found with a Latvian passport. You have probably had a good many passports. You have been leading an extremely suspicious life in Paris. You had no fixed abode. You were very cautious while making preparations for your crime. When, for instance, you noticed on several occasions that you were being followed in the street, you got rid of the unwelcome followers with professional ingenuity. I wish to do full justice to your cleverness. At last your plans for the murder were completed.

"You had learned that there was a diamond in M. Ney's office. It appears to have attracted you more than the contents of the safe. You were remarkably well informed about everything that went on in that office. That proves that you had accomplices. You knew that the servant did not sleep there. You knew that the niece of the murdered man had gone abroad. You knew that the blind daughter could not be a danger. The day before the murder you wrote a letter to your accomplice. You told her that all was ready, that you had to be careful. You promised that you would have money. You asked her to meet you at eight o'clock. You had no time to send that letter. You apparently found other means of communicating with her.

"During the night you went to the office in the Rue Thiboumery. It was about two o'clock; but I may be slightly wrong about the time. It may have been any time between one and three. The door was opened by M. Ney. You stunned him with one well-aimed blow. You may have pressed his eyelids. Anyhow, you rendered him unconscious, and you began to search his pockets. But M. Ney gave signs of life. You killed him in cold blood. If you have strong nerves, I can show you the knife. You found the diamond in M. Ney's pocket. But that did not satisfy you. You went to the study. You wanted all the plums. But you lost your nerve when



the dead man's daughter, awakened by the noise, ran into the study. Yes, yes, M. Cislav, do not be agitated, you were frightened. You took to your heels. But the blind girl caught the edge of your coat. You thought it best to leave it in her hands. In making your escape, you knocked over a chair. I do not know how you spent the rest of the night. But next day you met your friends. You handed over the diamond and in exchange you received eighty thousand francs. I must tell you something unpleasant: the diamond was worth more. You were cheated. Its real value is far more than what you received. But of course one cannot bargain in circumstances of that sort. You were content with what you received. You met your accomplice, not at eight o'clock, as we first supposed, but earlier. At four o'clock you were with her in the Avenue Kleber. At twelve minutes past nine you left Paris. I can understand your disappointment: a narrow cell instead of the Riviera. But it cannot be helped. Punishment follows every crime."

Having finished his homily, M. Elie Renaud was silent. He was pleased with the effect that he had produced and with his last phrase. He did not even glance at Andrew. He was admiring the smoke of his cigar.

Andrew too was silent. He did not know what to say. He felt numbed by this mixture of truth and fiction. He began to realize that there was nothing funny about this, that he was being entangled in a terrible net. Only one phrase had comforted him. Jeanne was not mixed up in it. Jeanne had gone away. They knew that. They did not know that Jeanne and the woman with whom he had been seen in the Avenue Kleber were one and the same person. And so he felt elated rather than otherwise at the examining magistrate's words. So long as Jeanne was not mixed up in it everything should be explained.

"Why are you silent, M. Cislav? I had hoped that my story would open your lips. I expected my frankness to be met with frankness. I tell you in all friendliness—silence will be your ruin. It is to your own interest to make a full confession to me. Believe my experience: a sincere confession always has a good effect on a jury. If you repent, you have a right to hope for a lighter sentence. Tell me where to find the diamond. Give me the names of your accomplices. In view of your youth I am willing to believe that you were merely a pawn in their hands. If so, you may confidently count on mercy."

"I repeat that I am absolutely innocent. I have never seen the diamond. Yours was the first mention of it I ever heard. What accomplices could I have?"

M. Elie Renaud frowned to express his disapproval of all this. It was the grimace of an experienced player who has to counter a childish move made by his opponent. He rang his bell. A messenger brought in a sealed package.

"Here is your coat. Do you recognize it?"

"That is not my coat. I have never had a mackintosh."

"Perhaps you will try on this coat which does not belong to you?"

Bewildered, Andrew shrugged his shoulders and put on the coat. There really was some devilish cunning in all this. The coat, purchased second-hand in Constantinople, nearly fitted him. It was only a little narrow at the shoulders. Andrew seized on that:

"You can see it is not mine. It's too tight for me."

"On the contrary; to my mind, it is an excellent fit. As for such minor details as you mention, I suppose that it was bought ready made and not made to order. Is that not so?"

"It is not my coat."

"And this pocketbook is not yours?"

"No, it is not. My pocketbook is black; it was taken from me when I was arrested."

"You have not a ready wit, M. Cislav. Do you mean to tell me that you, a man with several passports, have not two or even three pocketbooks? You show such a disinclination to recognize your own things that I fear you will refuse to recognize your own face. Do you think that you could recognize your own face?"

"I don't understand your joke. I am in no mood for jokes."

"Oh, neither am I, believe me. And so you could recognize yourself?" Saying this, the examining magistrate showed Andrew the photograph which had been cut out of his Lithuanian passport.

"Yes, that is my photograph. But I don't know how you got hold of it. I may have dropped it somewhere." (Andrew did not know that Jeanne had taken it from him at that meeting in the Luxembourg Garden. He really believed that he had dropped it then.)

"Yes, this time you are right. You did drop it. You lost it in the circumstances which I have just related. Your photograph was in its right place; that is, in your pocketbook. I am glad that you have given up answering with a negative everything that I say. The pocketbook contained a letter as well as the photograph—your letter to a certain person. From the text of this letter, it is clear that the person took an active part in this crime. Do you recognize the letter?"

"Yes."

"To whom was it written?"

A long pause ensued. The magistrate felt that Andrew was hesitating. He waited patiently. This waiting bored him. Once more his thoughts floated round his slowly smoked cigar. Why was its blue smoke so beautiful, so light, whereas it was quite different, gray, ugly, like dirty cotton

wool, when it came from his nostrils? It was like life. Before one took it in, it seemed mysterious and beautiful. And then? Then, work, papers, business, the boring interrogation of this stupid murderer who could not even lie properly. M. Elie Renaud might some day write a book, but it would not be a psychological novel à la Stendhal. He felt inclined just now to write a collection of profound and pessimistic meditations, a new version of the immortal Ecclesiastes.

Andrew was still silent. He was hesitating. He was on the point of naming Jeanne. He fully realized now that the magistrate meant business. A whole pile of evidence, whether due to accident or to somebody's careful contrivance, testified against him. Silence would indirectly confirm his guilt. If he said that he had spent the night with Jeanne at the hotel in the Rue Odessa the statement would carry weight. It would destroy all the clues. He was on the verge of saying her name. But at the same moment, he thought, no, it would do no good; it would only ruin her. He keeps on talking about accomplices. They would accuse her of murder too. If he won't believe me, why should he believe her? No one can vouch for our story. The staircase was dark. The landlady could see no one, and nobody asks to see your papers. How many couples go there every night? There would be no sense in it; he would only involve Jeanne. He would be betraying their love. With what a smutty laugh this polite man would question him about their night at the hotel. And as that thought struck him, Andrew answered firmly, "No I cannot tell you that."

"You do not wish to make a confession? I am sorry, young man. Think again. If you are frank with me you will get a sentence of a few years. You are young. You can expiate your crime. You will live. But, if you are obstinate—I will not hide the fact from you that you are threatened with the guillotine."

Andrew started. He suddenly recalled his journey, his heavy dream, the iron hand, the pain in his neck. He was afraid. He had never before been afraid of death. Not even on that night when he had been shut up in the barn waiting to be shot. There he had had men to deal with. Here, a terrible inexplicable machine was moving toward him. Neither the plain-clothes man who had arrested him, nor the gendarme, nor this polite magistrate felt any animosity toward him. They were merely carrying out the will of someone outside themselves. You can't talk to a machine, nor can you stop it. It goes on functioning and Andrew was frightened at the thought. His eyes became fixed and seemed to lose their color.

The accused man's state of mind was transmitted to M. Elie Renaud and filled him with contempt. Murder a man in cold blood and then tremble at the word "guillotine"?

"Speak!" he said with an air of command. "Enough of these antics!"

"I can only say that I am innocent."

Perhaps those words might have touched M. Elie Renaud if he had been less positive that he knew all there was to know about life. There are certain intonations which even the greatest actor cannot simulate. There was something in those words that would have given pause to the most eager of examining magistrates in the most remote corner of Russia. But M. Elie Renaud knew all the words in the world, so they did not interest him. If he had looked at Andrew, the childish expression of bewilderment in his eyes might have told him more than a whole mass of evidence. But human eyes inspired M. Elie Renaud with nothing but contempt. He was more interested in the red tip of a cigar, looking like a strawberry. He did not look at Andrew. He said dryly, "I have not much time. If you do not answer my



questions at once, I shall send you back. For the last time, I invite you to make a clean breast of it."

He was again silent. M. Elie Renaud watched his cigar burning and shedding its white ash over the table. He saw a man perishing before his eyes. He saw it and yawned. He had known all along how it would be.

Andrew reached a decision. He did not want to speak, but he said this much: "Well, I will confess something which will at once prove to you that I did not have anything to do with this murder. I am a Communist. And you know, of course, that Communists do not steal."

The examining magistrate smiled. This was really too naïf. For what did the murderer take him?

"I do not know what you mean by that. What do your political opinions matter to me? Murderers may be Royalists or Communists but still be murderers and thieves. I beg you earnestly to drop this play-acting."

"I am not talking about my political opinions. I was engaged here in illegal work."

"What work? With whom? Under whose leadership?"

"You must know very well that I cannot answer questions of that sort."

"What difference is there in value between the evidence you are giving now and that which you gave at first—that you were an honest Latvian business man? Really, you surprise me. You are big game, and I flatter myself that I am a hunter worthy of the quarry. You gave evidence of great talent by the manner in which you committed your crime. And now you have recourse to tricks which would be unworthy of the most inexperienced of pickpockets. Have you nothing more to say?"

"I will explain the main thing. I will tell you how I came by the eighty thousand."

"That's better. I am listening."

The magistrate took up a pencil and slightly bent his head as an indication of his attentiveness.

Andrew hesitated for a moment. Should he mention Jules Lebeau? It would, of course, be breaking his promise. But nothing that Andrew said could do any harm to the great writer. No one would dare touch him. Jules Lebeau had feared lest his action might be ascribed to the pose of a bored artist. But a man's life was of greater importance than any objection of that sort.

"I received that money from Jules Lebeau. I received it for Communist propaganda."

The cigar was tasteless and as short as the stump of an amputated finger. Removing it from his lips, M. Elie Renaud gave a sarcastic laugh.

"I am surprised that you do not accuse the great writer of stealing the diamond. First, you were a respectable man of business, and made a fuss about the incomprehensibility of your arrest. Next you were dead drunk. Then you turn into a mysterious revolutionary. And now you want to shift it all on to the dead. You are not even ashamed of casting aspersions on the memory of the illustrious dead."

"What? He is dead? Oh, it is impossible."

Worn out by the long interrogatory, Andrew was losing his presence of mind. He did not want to believe that Jules Lebeau was dead. He thought that this must be another piece of cleverly fabricated evidence against him, like the coat that had fitted him. He repeated indignantly, "It's impossible. You are playing with me. I am a Communist. I am not a criminal murderer."

M. Elie Renaud was not listening. He knew that he could get nothing more out of the prisoner. He was already composing the report of his examination. But on reaching a certain paragraph, he paused. He even put down his pen. The murderer had declared himself to be a Communist. That, of

course, was very effective. It would make the case a sensational one. But on the other hand, no one could tell how such a sensation would be regarded in political circles. In his conversation with the head of the Criminal Investigation Department, he had not been expressing his own opinions. No, in speaking of the undesirability of political cases, he had merely been repeating the words of the chief permanent official of the Ministry of Justice. The Left would raise a cry of pressure, of tacking party politics onto a common criminal case for propaganda purposes. Better be content with less, better be more modest. And, having weighed all this, M. Elie Renaud turned to Andrew: "Do you insist on the inclusion in the report of that part of your evidence which concerns your political views? Do you not think yourself that it would besmirch the—how shall I put it?—the principles which are dear to you? All the newspapers of the Right would cry out, 'See what the Communists do. They murder. They steal diamonds.' It might even affect the working classes. It would not make you any whiter, but it would make your party look much, much blacker."

Straining every nerve, Andrew tried to listen attentively. He was cunning, this magistrate, devilishly cunning. He meant to ruin Andrew and he would ruin him. He was not even human, he was a machine. He was stronger than Andrew. Andrew could do nothing. Andrew was very tired. Andrew was nearly dead. And Andrew answered indifferently, "Very well. Leave it out. And leave out what I said about Jules Lebeau. Only say that I am innocent. Say it clearly. Let everybody know that innocent people are done to death here."

M. Elie Renaud tossed the wet, chewed end of his cigar into the malachite ash tray. The Mexican cigar had been smoked to the end. Andrew still lived. He moved his fingers. He signed the report. But to the examining magistrate he

was only a corpse. M. Elie Renaud pressed his bell, and said, "Take him away."

He did not say it easily. What he wanted to say was, "Clear it away." Like the end of his cigar. Andrew no longer existed for M. Elie Renaud.

## XXXIV

### *He Had an Obsession Like Don José*

EVERYONE knows that people perspire from heat or passion. But notwithstanding the testimony of reliable observers, it is less generally known that most human beings exude a heavy sweat at the sight of money, of multicolored banknotes. This of course does not apply to bank clerks or to workers at the mint. But when you see a respectable gentleman in a bowler hat before a window where foreign money is displayed, admiring the Indians on long green notes, or the Houses of Parliament on other notes, thin and white, you may be certain that the lining of the bowler is quite damp, no matter how moderate the temperature may be.

It is therefore easy to imagine the smell in the big hall of the Casino where rolls of crackling banknotes fluttered over the green tables. No electric fans could get rid of it. Out of doors was the sea, out of doors were the scents of acrid green olives, of tangerines, of the soft breeze. But those scents were all too delicate, too subtle, to compete with the smell of hundreds of vests, dress-preservers and waistcoats. The women perspired most freely, and their perspiration turned to liquid their thick layers of powder, leaving their faces exposed. And those women would expose any part of their persons rather than their faces; for, bereft of make-up—of powder, pencil, and brush—they looked not like human faces, but like those of slaving hyenas. Yes, they



made their way to the tables impudently yet timidly, like the wild beasts that feed on carrion, the real hyenas. They were indifferent to the fact that their hats were tilted to one side or that the fastenings of their dresses were undone. Their bodies had gone mad. Their agitation made them tremble, not like human beings but like earthquakes. As long as the little white ball was careering round the number-marked disk they breathed heavily, licking their wet lips. For the sight of money causes not only perspiration, but an abundant flow of saliva, just as the sight of carrion produces it in a hyena.

They had other traits, too, in common with hyenas. At the moment they recognized no distinctions of race or social grade. Outside the walls of the Casino, the wife of a worthy financier would not have thought of speaking to her husband's mistress, nor would anyone have dared to place Louise, from the Rococo Bar, next to the Russian aristocrat in whose flaccid, jellied body coursed the blood of the Rurics. But here, pressed against each other, they formed one heaving mass of smelly flesh.

The behavior of the men was no better. They freely elbowed the women. They were superstitiously clutching various mascots for luck: little bells, dried edelweiss, a lady's garter. They wrote down the winning numbers as though they were possessed, trying to forecast the intentions of the white ball by elaborate multiplications and divisions. When they won they threw whole packets of notes to the flower sellers, taking delicate roses and crushing the frail petals into a wet pudding with their thick fingers. Then they would get dead drunk and fall insensible to the tiled floor of the cloakroom.

Some of those who lost would creep away to the bushes, open wide their mouths, as though to show the doctor their throats, and with tremulous hand insert the muzzle of a

revolver and bespatter the lovely, shiny, green olive-leaves with the curdled milk of their brains.

The croupiers on their high stools sat like idols. It was they who started the rotating ball. Day after day they callously called out numbers until they grew hoarse. The gravediggers buried the dead. The municipal employees pumped out the sewers with long hoses. The croupiers kept on calling out numbers. That was their profession. It was also their duty to classify the players in a hierarchy in which neither rank nor titles played any part. The one determinant factor was the amount of the sum staked. When, therefore, an elegantly dressed man, known as a high player, approached one of the tables, a place was at once found for him. The croupiers had every reason to respect him. Before he had given himself time to occupy the seat which had been politely offered, he took a roll of notes from his pocket and threw five thousand on No. 16. For a first stake it was not a small one. The croupier held his breath until he called, "Twenty-three," in a tone of regret.

Although the gambler played often and for high stakes, his manner did not in any way differ from that of the other players. He was obviously nervous. After having placed his stake, he would take it back or push it on to another number. There were some obstinate players who put their money on the same number over and over again in their determination to get the better of fate. But he naïvely hoped to fall in with the caprices of the ball. Thus, having put large sums on the first dozen four times running, and having lost each time, he doubled his stake to back the third dozen. The winning number was six. He was as unlucky as he had been the day before, and the day before that. He had left stupendous sums at the Casino each evening. He was, however, particularly unlucky to-day. He was raging. He was pitiful. He even tried to cheat. When twenty-two won he tried

stealthily to push his stake onto the adjoining square. The croupier politely stopped him. He was filled with a superstitious dread of his own ill luck. He must have forgotten to do something. He was wearing the medallion of Our Lady of Lourdes which a fortune teller had given to him. Ah, he had forgotten something! He rose and went to the next room in search of his latest acquaintance, Mlle Viole, a musical comedy star.

"Show me your bare knee," he implored, "or I shall never win."

It was a sheer superstition, just like any of the others. But Mlle Viole was obstinate. How could she do such a thing in front of everyone? It was stupid. There was a limit to all things. What a Tartar! What a low Oriental! Still, she did not want to quarrel with this foreigner who scattered money right and left. So under pretence of pulling up her stocking, Mlle Viole uncovered her pink knee for a moment. Satisfied with that, the gambler rushed back to the table. But the knee had been of no use. The numbers still mocked him. The ball was a cheat. The gambler was mad. A stud fell from the shirt front which he had clutched and crumpled in his perspiring hand. He did not notice it. The shirt front opened its hard, starched mouth, showing a cellular undershirt and tufts of black hair. His chest was covered with a hairy growth, but it brought him no luck, notwithstanding the superstition that it would. Who can tell how much he would have lost that evening if Mlle Viole, tired of waiting for her new friend, had not interfered? She approached the table and began to urge him to stop playing. He would not listen to her. He was incapable of hearing anything but the numbers. Mlle Viole pulled his shoulder. He felt her breast against his hand. He started. He had not yet tired of Mlle Viole, and his passion for the gaming table was rivalled by his passion for women. He sighed sadly, and left the table, modestly

arranging his disordered clothes. They passed into the next room, where there was a bar. A waiter, noticing the overheated condition of the newcomer, offered lemonade or ices. But no iced drink could cool him. He knew only one remedy, learned in his far-away fatherland, the efficacy of which he had often tested. He called the waiter:

"Tea. Lots of it. A double portion."

He explained to the astonished Mlle Viole: "When you are hot, hot tea is the best thing. It makes you perspire freely."

That sounded strange, because he already looked like a man who had just emerged from a shower bath. His was rank perspiration, however, the perspiration of the loser.

"Well, did my knee help you?" asked Mlle Viole with a mocking smile.

"No, your knee is all rot. I mean it's a delightful knee to kiss. It's a charming knee, it's like a kiss itself. But it does not always help one to win. If only I had my holder——"

Faraway visions of the past rose before his sight. Sitting in a luxurious Italian casino with Mlle Viole, the most expensive and inaccessible cocotte in Europe, he suddenly visualized a dirty hotel room at Theodosia; his fish cooked à la Grecque, the miserable mess of pottage in exchange for which he had given his precious holder to the snuffling Aristrach. The unlucky gambler gave himself up to his reminiscences, sighing gloomily as he drank cup after cup of hot tea. He might have sighed even more deeply. The pictures passing through his mind were neither innocent nor peaceful. Not to mention the distant past—the Mariopul engineer, his experiences as a spy, the skinny Englishwoman, and all that—it was enough to make him not only sigh but groan to recall the brindled cat rushing through the night with its tail erect along the Boulevard Edgar Quinet. And Chichi's shoulders! And the station! And all that happened after! He drank his sixth cup of tea and

turned entreatingly to his companion: "You must say, 'Poor Niko.' You say it so sweetly; it reminds me of my dead mother."

Of course he was lying. He had never known his mother, and the aunt who had brought him up had never used any tender pet names but had called his unfeelingly, "Nikishka." But he longed for tenderness, or at least its simulation. He wanted someone to pity him. Mlle Viole was quite willing to oblige him. She said, "Poor Niko," three or four times, in the hope of driving away her companion's melancholy. It was, however, in vain. He began his seventh cup of tea, which means that he began fresh sighs and reminiscences.

M. Elie Renaud would have found here plenty of food for reflection. This was a man who was unhappy in spite of all that he had achieved, a man whose state suggested sad thoughts as to the vanity of human desires. The examining magistrate would hardly have felt for him the contempt that he had felt for Andrew. He would probably have pressed his damp hand and, with Gallic fervor, have cried, "Ecce Homo." Why was he unhappy? He had realized all the hopes of which he had spoken to the waiter Louis. He was at San Remo—that is, only ten kilometers from Mentone. Outside there were olives and the sea. It was a lovely May evening. Perhaps he was simply exhausted. For he had not come straight to San Remo from the Western Railway Station to which he had driven in a horrid, creaky taxi. Two months had passed since that far from ordinary night.

How had Halibieff spent that time? Very badly. He had at first been poor, cruelly, hideously poor, so that he had thought with longing of the hotel bed in the Rue Mouton Duvernet. He had gone first to Mayence and thence to Frankfurt. His ticket had swallowed up all the money that had been left after the supper at the Avenue Restaurant. He had starved. He had wandered about for five



days like a homeless cur, begging for alms and picking up cigarette ends. He had sought refuge at night under a railway arch and, fingering his waistcoat pocket, had shed tears of rage. Life, like the little white ball, had made a mock of him. Then there had been a little break in the clouds. He had given himself out to be a Jew, an honest Jew, following the laws of Moses, and his aristocratic hooked nose helped him in that, though ordinarily it indicated the near kinship of the Halibieffs to the princely house of Dolgorouki. In that way he had been able to worm himself into a Society for the Assistance of Victims of Ukrainian Pogroms, which had given him a little money. He had first got himself some decent clothes, and then moved to Berlin. There, with every appearance of overflowing good feeling for the people of Israel, he had sought out a certain M. Moses Jacobi, an Amsterdam dealer in precious stones, who had come to Berlin to buy gems with depreciated marks. They happened to have supper together at the Regina Restaurant. After that supper Halibieff no longer fingered his waistcoat pocket or shed tears of rage. He had gone to San Remo to enjoy life. That had been in the middle of April.

Surely that should have been the end of his troubles. A new life had opened before him with sunshine and blue skies like the posters which the Casino management used to advertise the natural beauties of San Remo. But he was far from happy. Several circumstances kept him from enjoyment of the sunshine and the azure sea. The most important of them was fear. Yes, Castor, who had been the emblem of courage in Cherkessoff Lane, fell to such depths of cowardice that even Nechensohn, who was forever shaking like a lemon jelly, the miserable Nechensohn, would have advised him to take a sedative. Halibieff never entered a room now, for example, without stretching out his hands as feelers. He had a terror of doorways. The sight of a policeman made

him sick. He hated himself for it and would make himself go up to one of them to ask his way to such and such a street, and while speaking to him would think: Suppose that instead of directing me he seizes me by the collar! He didn't dare think of going to Paris, and yet he knew that he would never find peace until he did go to Paris; nay, more, until he had walked down that infernal Rue Thiboumery casually tapping its pavement with his walking stick. Though nobody questioned him on the subject, he would tell everyone that he was soon going to Paris on business. Whenever he reached a new town he would go straightway to the French Consulate to inquire about a visa. Yet those visits were sheer torture. He would lie down all day after them, applying cold compresses to his chest.

Then there was his passion for gambling. He played every evening, played and, as we have seen, lost. His money was rapidly melting away and for the first time in his life that distressed him. He had never before minded about money. He had got it easily. He had got it by inspiration. His money had not been for him the bread of a hireling, but fruit from the Garden of Eden. But now the money which he had got from the Dutch Jew was quite different. That he had earned, he had earned it by bitter toil, and it was painful to have to leave some of it every night with the indifferent croupier. He was longing to have his revenge. He was not going to leave San Remo until he had had it. He concentrated on his play, but he played erratically, passionately, desperately. He could barely refrain from flinging himself on the roulette table, from grinding the mocking white ball to powder. His hands longed to fly at the croupier's throat, while he kept them cowering in his pockets.

And, finally, there was one more circumstance to poison the life of this apparently easygoing man about town. No doubt he had achieved his object. It was true that he no

longer lodged in a wretched hotel in the Rue Mouton Duvernet. He was a universally respected foreigner with an armchair in the Casino, motor cars, roses, wine, women at his service. But the choicest fruit had grown no more accessible. On the contrary, it was farther from his reach than ever; it had, indeed, become forbidden fruit.

Why had Don José desired that little slut, Carmen, that girl from the cigarette factory, above all the women in the world? Stupidity? Infatuation? Well, Halibieff was suffering from the madness of infatuation. He was no worse than others. He wanted that brunette, and no other brunette, however piquant, could make him forget her. He had tried in all sorts of ways. He sought out the most interesting, the most attractive little ladies. But it was no use. He did, it is true, fling himself upon them, but toward morning he always experienced the same disillusionment; toward morning he always had before his eyes the dark face that he had last seen on the winding staircase of the hotel on that terrible night.

He had been told that the musical comedy star, Mlle Viole, was a real virtuoso of love. Well, he had stopped at no expense. He had agreed to the purchase of a sapphire ring. But would the celebrated Mlle Viole cure him? Not likely.

These dramatic, one might almost say melodramatic, emotions—fear, passion, the love of gambling—caused Halibieff to heave those sighs which were beginning to bore his spoiled companion. She even expressed her intention of leaving him. That brought Halibieff to his senses. No, she must not go away. He would be cheerful. Benedictine appeared on the table, to replace the teapot. He drank the sweet, sticky liqueur out of his cup, instead of the little glass which the waiter had brought. He drank it in one gulp, making Mlle Viole frown with disapproval. The strong, sweet drink made him cough. He spilled some on his un-

fortunate shirt front. He tried to entertain his lady with conversation—not just chatter, but interesting talk.

"You, my beautiful, do not understand the Russian soul. You chirp like a canary: la-la-li-li. But we sing. We sing like bulls, like sphinxes, like angels. Honestly! If I were to begin to sing now everyone would be in tears."

Mlle Viole looked at him uneasily: "No, Niko, don't sing. No, you mustn't sing."

"I was only explaining. I wanted to indicate to you the depth of my soul, a profound soul. There are many vices, crimes, and blood in it. I am not speaking about myself. I am a quiet, peaceable man. I came here for my health. But imagine it, there are such souls among us. Some Bolshevik, a beast, a rascal. He breaks into the house of some bourgeois, strangles him, cuts his throat, cuts it so that there is a whole sea of blood. The wretched bourgeois groans, grrr, grrr, but he only smiles. You think that he is a beast? He's a god! His soul is perhaps thirsting for harmony, he strains toward heaven, he listens for music. He is dreaming of a woman, of his ideal, a brunette, you know, something like you, but more of the Madonna type, who is unapproachable. He suffers. He weeps."

There was a suspicious tremor in Halibieff's voice. You cannot drink Benedictine out of teacups with impunity. Mlle Viole was considering how she should spend the rest of the evening. Should it be with the Argentinian from the Bel Sito or with M. Lawrence? The situation was saved by a newsboy, an ordinary newspaper boy who was selling Paris papers. That turned the gloomy romantic's thoughts into a different channel. He bought several papers and proceeded to explain to his companion why he did so.

"I'm going to Paris in a few days, so it's interesting to find out what's going on there. And now you will excuse me if I leave you for a moment."

"Very well. Why do you take the papers? Leave them here, and I can look through the theater columns."

"I can't. I want the papers myself."

Noticing that he went to the lavatory, Mlle Viole reddened with indignation. What low fellows these rich Muscovites were. How could she guess Halibieff's reasons for wanting the newspapers? How could she know that when he reached the lavatory Halibieff would lock himself in for no other purpose than to read with the closest attention? He didn't dare look at the papers in the presence of others for fear his agitation should betray him. Nor could he wait until nightfall when he would be alone. Twice a day, therefore, when he bought the Paris papers, he shut himself up in the lavatory. There there was nobody to prevent him from shivering freely. To-day's paper contained highly important news for him:

"In accordance with the demands of Nicholas Cislav's counsel, Gabrielle Ney, the daughter of the murdered man, was re-called for further cross examination. After contradicting herself several times, the witness declared that Jeanne Ney, the niece of the murdered man, had disappeared on the day of the murder, and in her opinion the disappearance had been unexpected. It must be remembered, however, that Mlle Gabrielle Ney suffers from a nervous disorder, and that therefore too much importance must not be attached to her evidence. The next witness, the director of the detective bureau, M. Gaston Poux, again affirmed that Mlle Jeanne Ney had gone two days before the murder with the knowledge and consent of her uncle. It is necessary, therefore, to reject any suggestion that Mlle Jeanne Ney had in any way been involved in the horrible crime. As for the accused, he continues to persist in his former evidence. The only thing that he has added to that is



what he says is his real name. He declares that he is a Russian, and that his name is Leboeuf. It is impossible to verify the truth of his statement. It is clear, however, that we are dealing with an experienced criminal whose operations are on international lines."

After having read that, Halibieff inanely began to tear the newspapers into tiny fragments as though their existence might betray him. He was glad that that insolent fellow would be sentenced. He had spent the night kissing his brunette in that hotel in the Rue Odessa. Now they would behead him. His head would roll down like a watermelon. Red juice would run from the watermelon. He should not have kissed Halibieff's brunette. He should not have smiled in his photograph. He should not have mocked poor Halibieff. Halibieff had a mad infatuation. He was like José. He wanted the brunette. He was jealous. He was glad to be revenged. The man who had taken that sweet from him should die. It was the justice of fate. It would, perhaps, compensate for those nights in Frankfurt; for all the mischief of the little white ball.

But what if the brunette should return to Paris? What if she heard about the case? She ought to be strangled. She was the one witness who was dangerous for Halibieff. She might guess who had stolen the letter and the photograph. Those who are in love are always looking to see whether all their treasures are safe. She would take out the photograph to kiss it. If only she would once kiss Halibieff like that. But that was not the point at the moment. The brunette had seen him on the stairs. She might turn out to be a veritable prosecutor. Could it be possible that Nechensohn would let her leave Russia? Persecuted by the Furies, the wretched Halibieff, trembling in a lavatory, relies on

you, O friendship worthy of ancient Greece, relies on you as on a wall of granite.

Long ago, while he had been still in Berlin, Halibieff had sent a very confidential letter to his former partner, who now held a prominent position in the Timber Trust. He confided a lonely brunette to his care. He hinted darkly, but in a manner that would be perfectly clear to Nechensohn, reminding him of their last meeting. Nechensohn had then said, "Lay your hands on no man." He was right. It was best that a man who was in your way should lay hands on himself. Words of gold. And so, if the brunette would only leave a note before she disappeared, it would be a great comfort to Halibieff who was pining in a foreign land. He had gone on to congratulate Nechensohn on the success of the Trust and to furnish valuable information about his own plans. He had already written a playful article in a suitable newspaper, thanks to which he hoped to obtain a Soviet passport. He would then turn his steps toward the Russian capital as the representative of a large Belgian firm negotiating a concession. The letter had been sent through a trustworthy channel, and it had been written in a metaphorical style that was full of cryptic allusions. Halibieff based all his hopes on Nechensohn. Had he found the brunette? Perhaps he had got rid of her already. That would be good. But it would be horrible, too. For that girl was the only thing in the world that he desired, and of what use would it be to live without any desire? No, let her go on living. Then, sooner or later, he would get her. But she might denounce him. Halibieff would be arrested. He would be beheaded. His head would roll down like a watermelon.

In despair, Halibieff clutched his big, heavy head. That was impossible. If it was necessary that one of the two should die, there was not the slightest doubt that it must be the girl.

Halibieff was very pale when he left the lavatory. He could hardly walk after his recent emotion. When Mlle Viole saw him she said irritably, "How can you behave like that with a lady? Are you—ill?"

Halibieff replied pensively, "No, I am suffering. I have an obsession. I dreamed of a brunette, something like you, only raised to a higher power. Of course, it was only a dream. But I suffer from an obsession. I give you my word, from an obsession, like José."

## XXXV

### *Concerning Homelessness and Home*

COMRADE ZAHARKEVITCH was not there. He had gone to the coal fields on the Don. His door was shut. Jeanne lingered on the stairs of the big house. What was she to do? Where was she to go? A single phrase had rendered her homeless and friendless. Zaharkevitch had gone away. Why had she never before thought of that as a possibility? Why had she not asked Andrew for other addresses? It had, of course, been difficult to think of anything on that mad day. She had reached Moscow almost penniless; except for Comrade Zaharkevitch, friendless.

Jeanne walked along Deviatinsky Street. Moscow was no longer the fasting heroine of those years about which the romantic Andrew had raved that morning in the hotel in the Rue Odessa. Moscow was now lively, full of amusements and noise. Moscow took no notice of a little French girl who had come for heaven knows what. If Jeanne had been a Communist, members of the French group would of course have known her. If she had come, as Halibieff dreamed of coming, as the representative of a large foreign firm, seeking to exploit the natural wealth of Russia, she would have been met at the station and taken straight to the Savoy, where everything was done in European style. But she was only a poor little wanderer, and Moscow was busy with the German revolution, with the rate of exchange of Russian money, with the sale of rubber and the opening of the Empire. Moscow had no time for her.

The street which she was in could lay no claim to respectability. The hiccupping of old organs came from the drinking places. Hungry, ragged prostitutes were edging their way in and out like cats. Men who had illicit spirits or cocaine for sale penetrated the passers-by with gimlet eyes in the effort to discover their cravings. The whole street seemed full of hideous whispers. A red-bearded nepman,<sup>1</sup> whose pockets were so full of gold that they chinked with his every movement, was giving instructions to two obsequious messengers who were buzzing round him.

"She must be about twelve, not more, and it must be the first time." He repeated this casually and calmly, just as an hour before he had repeated his order to the waiter at the Hermitage Restaurant: "Something choice, asparagus, for example, with a purée of hazel-hens."

There was a child crying somewhere. Perhaps it was the little girl who had already been caught to amuse the amateur of unusual sensations. Jeanne walked along the street. She had seen it all, and it was not new to her.

Throughout her journey Jeanne had borne up courageously. She, too, had sensed that it was not a mere separation. Trying to picture to herself at some moment what Andrew was doing, she would be suddenly overcome by a presentiment. Something had happened to him. He had been arrested. How gladly would Jeanne have returned to him!

The temptation had been so strong in Berlin that Jeanne had wavered. She had made up her mind that if no Russian visa should be forthcoming in two days, she would go back to Toulon. But the visa had been granted. She would still have returned, if Andrew had not told her that she would only be in the way at Toulon. Jeanne must be brave. She wrote a letter full of courage to Andrew, posted it to the ad-

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<sup>1</sup>Nepman—New economic policy man; i. e., one who had availed himself of Lenin's permission to conduct private commercial enterprises.



dress upon which they had agreed, and made her way to the Friedrichstrasse Station. Two trains were standing opposite each other. Jeanne read the inscriptions which they bore. One was going toward Andrew and the other away from him. Jeanne did not make a mistake as to the trains. She was on her way to Moscow, just as Andrew was on his way to Toulon. And just as Andrew had forbidden his heart to beat too fast, so Jeanne now forbade hers. But it was beating desperately. He would be arrested. Jeanne would not see him again. Stupid heart, it was trying to make a catastrophe out of a simple parting. How could two grown-up beings lose each other? There were railway stations at both Toulon and Moscow. It was only a four days' journey. Stupid heart, it did not understand those words of wisdom. The word obsessing it was the most tragic of all the words in the thick dictionaries of Dahl and Larousse, the terrible word, "forever."

All this had gone on inside her, and no one had had any inkling of it. But now, in this hideous street, she could bear it no longer. Instead of trying to find a hotel where she could spend the night, she stepped inside a gateway and burst into tears. Had that one day with Andrew, the flower market, the Bois de Boulogne and the games they had played there, been granted to her only that she might be flung back to the Rue Thiboumery? She would stay on this very spot forever, in this gateway, alone, homeless, she would never see Andrew again.

Somebody called to her. Several young men were inviting her with suggestive words and eager gestures to come right into the courtyard. There were women swearing. They were well organized and were not going to allow the presence of competitors. But Jeanne did not move; she was too busy with her tears.

It was nearly an hour before she collected enough strength

to continue on her way. She had remembered that she must be strong. She found a room in a very small lodging house. As Deviatinsky Street resembled the Rue Thiboumery this lodging house differed but little from the hotel in the Rue Odessa. But Andrew was not with her now, and so No. 6, which she occupied, did not turn into a fairy palace. It remained what it was—a nasty, dirty hole. Jeanne did not sleep all night. Someone was singing Tzigane songs in the next room. Jeanne lay there, clasping her hands, feeling as though she had Andrew's hand between her palms. The hand, for some reason or other, was very cold—like a dead hand. Jeanne could hardly refrain from screaming. When she fell into a heavy, feverish sleep at dawn the hand came to life and caressed her. But it had ceased to be Andrew's hand. Then everything became horrible. Andrew merged into Halibieff. Jeanne did not know who it was she was with. Somebody was clasping her in his arms. She screamed. She screamed in her sleep.

Morning came. Jeanne counted her money and decided that it would last a fortnight if she did without dinners. She went out and bought a roll. She then went to a newspaper office to insert the following advertisement: "Wanted, correspondence or any other work. Knowledge of French and Russian. Hôtel Crimea, 18 Rojdestvinsky Boulevard. J. Ney." She spent four more days in that dark room. She waited. She nibbled bread. She wrote letters to Andrew. She often wept in the night. On the fifth day a letter was handed to her. It requested her to go to the Timber Trust between three and four o'clock and ask for Comrade Nechensohn. Jeanne smiled for the first time since leaving Paris.

The highly esteemed leading spirit of the Timber Trust, Comrade, Citizen—but to the timber merchants, his wife,

and waiters at the Empire *Mister*—Nechensohn, had received Halibieff's letter a week before. He had made a careful study of it. There were two parts to the letter: requests and promises. Nechensohn would have paid no attention to the requests if the promises had not been there. It was only beggars who allowed themselves to make requests without promises, and they—praise be to God—were being rapidly cleared from the streets of Moscow by the efforts of the militia. Everybody else who asked for anything had to promise something. If Halibieff had put a full stop at the end of his lamentations over a certain dangerous person, Nechensohn would undoubtedly have thrown his letter into the waste-paper basket with the ingenuous epistle of a provincial complaining about some official irregularity.

But Halibieff knew his friend through and through. Those five or six lines about his own early arrival, about capital and the concession, were not written for nothing. Nechensohn read the letter carefully, and then he sent a messenger to the official Enquiry Bureau to ask about a certain person. Jeanne was not yet in Moscow. Glancing lazily through the *Izvestia* a few days later, Nechensohn caught sight of a small advertisement. The name Ney struck his eye pleasantly. It was associated in his mind with appetizing concessions.

Everything was settled in a quarter of an hour. Nechensohn offered Jeanne a place. It was a good way from Moscow, certainly, in the province of Vologda. Remote. But the terms were splendid, fare paid there and back. Intellectual work. Jeanne was to teach in an elementary school. Nice people. In a word . . .

When Jeanne asked whether she could give up the job in case she were obliged to return to Moscow suddenly, Nechensohn feigned astonishment. Of course she could.

This was not 1919. The railways were working on time. Jeanne trustfully thanked Nechensohn. She was willing to go next day.

When Jeanne had gone, Nechensohn at once sat down to write his representative, a certain Kabotinsky. The letter was short and authoritative. There was no need to make any bones about anything with Kabotinsky. He was a little cheat who took bribes. He had been in the provincial prison four times, and each time had emerged as though nothing had happened. He was entirely in Nechensohn's power. He was one of those industrious scoundrels who, by remaining in the thickest forests, make it possible for the Nechensohns of the world to sit in a comfortable study, far from all forests, and to turn such an indigestible thing as timber into well-cooked fish at the Empire. Nechensohn wrote that the new employee must not leave Kabotinsky's district. She was a menace to decent people in Moscow. He left the rest to Kabotinsky's discretion. And that was all.

When Nechensohn had finished his letter he turned his steps homeward, fully satisfied. However good the Empire dinners might be they were but coarse prose as compared with the poetry of Mme Nechensohn's culinary art. If in the gloomy days of military Communism the mere smell of her Milanese pancakes sent Halibieff into raptures, imagine what viands were served at the table of the respected chief of the Timber Trust. What pies! What a turkey! Nechensohn was finishing a turkey wing with some feeling. When he had done, he began to rub his knees with his fat white hands, which somewhat resembled the flesh of a young turkey. He was happy. He had achieved success in life. He had proved cleverer than Halibieff. He had not run away. He had not experienced all the unpleasantness of the road. He had not lost his furniture. He had merely sat tight for four years, scarcely daring to

breathe. But he had outlasted the Revolution. His wife was once more wearing sealskins. His daughter Riva was learning English and Dalcroze. He really was happy. Nobody had such delicious turkeys as he did. But why did Riva eat so little? She had a bad appetite. He must call in a doctor. Perhaps she read bad books at night? Perhaps it was time she was married? Perhaps her stomach was out of order?

"Riva, my jewel, why didn't you finish your turkey?"

Riva did not answer. She only raised her sad, dark eyes to her father. Probably she had a stomachache. But her glance reminded Nechensohn of the trustful eyes of the newly engaged employee. She was a child, like Riva. That beast Kabotinsky would do for her. The turkey and home comforts had softened Nechensohn. He even pitied Jeanne. But he quickly recovered himself. How stupid! The world was full of unhappy people. If one was to pity them all one's heart would not suffice. And, merciful God, how many had perished in the war? How many had died of typhus? He, Nechensohn, had been very unhappy. Now that he had managed to scramble out it would be absurd to upset himself over all sorts of nonsense. And forgetting Jeanne he said, in a voice tremulous with tenderness, "Riva, my precious one, eat a little more, just a little bit. It is so good. It is the breast."



## XXXVI

### *Why Prison Silence Is Sometimes Broken*

THE international criminal whose real name M. Elie Renaud had failed to ascertain was confined in cell No. 97 in the Fourth Wing of the Santé Prison, where particularly important prisoners were kept pending their trial. He had swept his floor neatly and was cleaning his copper bowl.

It was very quiet in the cell. It is never as quiet as that outside a prison, even on the stillest autumn evening. The quietness was artificial, carefully planned, and well carried out. The Governor of the prison had reason to be proud of it. He liked to admonish his subordinates: "Walk softly, never speak to them, punish them noiselessly, make them forget all sounds." And those who were interned in the Fourth Wing did indeed forget the sounds of the world. They would sometimes talk to themselves in whispers at night, or cough to break the unbearable silence. But you cannot talk to yourself for long; you feel that you are going mad. The prisoners would relapse into silence, and the scarcely broken stillness of the cells would be completely restored. They would dream about insects that fly and buzz. But the windows of the cells did not open; they were aired by special ventilators, so that even the flies were unable to interfere with the Governor's scheme. When a prisoner could bear it no longer and broke into a scream a warder would put his hand over his mouth and lead him to an isolation cell, the walls of which swallowed up every sound,

so that the prisoner could scream and fling himself about as he chose.

Prisoner No. 97 was accused of premeditated murder and had been confined for more than two months. During all that time he had not heard any human voice except that of the skeptical M. Elie Renaud talking at his cross-examinations. He didn't know who was in the next cell. To get into touch with anyone outside seemed a crazy notion, he didn't even see the warders. Three times a day a hatch was opened and a bowl of soup or coffee was pushed through. There were no human beings. It was useless to call. No one would hear him. Once, when he was being taken to the examining magistrate, he had stopped in the long corridor and shouted, "Will someone let the Communists outside know——"

But the warder had immediately covered his mouth with a large silk handkerchief. M. Elie Renaud had asked him sarcastically, "Cannot you be as talkative here as in the prison corridor?"

It tormented him that he was unable to get into touch with those who were free in the outside world. He wanted to let the comrades in Moscow know that "the international criminal" who was to be tried for murder under the name of Nicholas Cislav was the Communist Andrew Loboff. He wanted to let them know that, thanks to evidence concocted in some inexplicable manner, party funds amounting to eighty thousand francs were being lost, and that a life, the life of a party worker, was being sacrificed. But it was impossible. The architect of the prison had done his work well. The Governor was doing his work well. Andrew had only M. Elie Renaud or the silence to speak to, and they were equally indifferent to his words.

The hatch opened three times a day, the prisoners were well fed. In this wing they received double rations. The Governor looked after them well. Were not the prisoners in-

carcerated there to await their trial of particular importance? Most of them were threatened with the death sentence. The Governor of the prison took every care that the prisoners who were to be executed should feel well. When he thought about them he became the director of a sanatorium. He could not allow them to die before their time. That was why everything that might have enabled them to commit suicide was kept from them. No nurses could have been more attentive than the warders of the Fourth Wing. Even their forks were made of bone. As for braces or ties, they were taken away with fear and trembling as though they had been bombs as soon as a prisoner was consigned to the Fourth Wing.

A few years earlier one of the prisoners, an anarchist and a criminal, sentenced to be guillotined, had managed to file through his bars and get onto the roof of the many-storied wing. The Governor had tried all sorts of persuasion: "Give yourself up, my friend. The firemen will get you down in a few minutes. I promise you better rations."

But the convict had been obdurate.

"What do I want with your food? In a few days I shall be executed. I prefer to break my neck myself."

The Governor gave orders that the prison yard should be covered with mattresses. But the convict outwitted them. He found a spot not yet covered with a mattress, and flung himself down. That made the Governor's eyes fill with tears. He regarded that as the most unhappy day of his life. What? A man whose head was to have been solemnly cut off had dared to smash it himself? But that head did not belong to him. It already belonged to the State.

Nothing of that kind ever happened again. There were no escapes, no suicides. Increased rations. Isolation. After

a misfortune like that the Governor had grown a hundred times more watchful. He had triumphed.

Prisoner No. 97 was receiving double rations. The Governor wanted him to look well at his trial. But in spite of all his efforts, Andrew, thin, worn-out, and unshaved, looked like an old tramp. He hardly touched his copper bowls. He tossed all night in his bunk, only dozing off toward morning. He was suffering, just as any other healthy young man would have suffered if compelled to wait three months for an inexplicable, inevitable death. Perhaps he suffered more than most would have done, because he loved life more. He was now for the first time feeling the full force of that love, clinging desperately with hand and foot to every memory, and with the unformed instinct of a child, striving to gain time, if only by a moment. Within the prison walls he relived his life. But what had been slow and ordered now rushed past with catastrophic rapidity. He had spent six years on the Revolution—they seemed now but as one noisy day of the spring floods. He had not had enough days of that kind.

If Jules Lebeau, who was sixty-two years old and loved no one, had longed for life when he was dying, what must Andrew have felt? If they had killed him at once he would have died simply and bravely. He might even have sung as he went to his death. But he had had those three months flung at him like alms. That had given him time to realize fully all the joy of life of which they were depriving him.

He had lost count of dates. The temperature of his cell never varied. Sunbeams were on the Governor's list of things which must not enter the cells. But Andrew nevertheless felt it was spring; that the chestnut and the ash had blossomed, that on the Boulevard Montparnasse, not far from the Santé Prison, the plane trees were shedding their pale green follicles on the pavements. He felt it, because

in spite of everything, he himself, the worn-out, elderly tramp, the prisoner No. 97, was full of it.

They were taking his life. Well, he was no coward. If only he could have died fighting! But about death in this guise there was something ridiculous, something offensive, to which he could not adjust himself. To be executed for the theft of a diamond! It was worse than death. It was a mockery.

Often at night, restlessly pacing his cell from end to end, Andrew would try to discover some means of escape. He realized that help could come from outside only if news of him reached the comrades. But how could that be achieved? Pouatras was close at hand, in the same prison, but Andrew had no means of getting in touch with him. No other French comrade even knew him by sight. Suppose that they should be informed that such and such a person had failed to reach his destination. He might have been arrested under an alias. He might have fallen ill on the way. They would never dream of connecting with the comrade who had started to Toulon the international criminal arrested for a brutal murder. The Russians? But when would the news reach Russia? Besides, even there they know nothing about Cislav.

At his last cross-examination, Andrew had informed M. Elie Renaud that his real name was Loboff. He had insistently, feverishly begged that that name be mentioned in the report. The newspapers had long ago tired of the murder in the Rue Thiboumery. There were sensational murders committed every day, and after all, a newspaper had only six pages. In a short, inconspicuous paragraph, Andrew's name had been misspelled. Either the reporter or the printer had Frenchified it, and it was printed Leboeuf instead of Loboff. That newspaper might have reached Russia, but who would guess that it had anything to do with Andrew, who had disappeared without leaving any trace?



Yet Andrew expected to be liberated. Every time his hatch was opened he would rush to it, expecting to find someone there who would say good-naturedly: "It was a mistake; you are free." But nothing appeared except the bowl of food, and the warder, watching through the observation hole, thought he was greedy. There came no sign of deliverance. In moments of despair Andrew would beat his head against the door. But everything had been foreseen—the door was covered with felt. It was during one of those moments that he had begun to shout in the corridor, but he had not been allowed to complete his request.

These fits alternated with days of quiet indifference, empty days which seemed unreal. On those, Andrew would meekly sweep his floor and drink his coffee. But his real self was not there. He had melted into the avid, heavy silence of the Fourth Wing. And so things would go on until he was reminded of Jeanne by some small detail—a spot on the wall, or the movement of his own hand.

Andrew thought of her incessantly. And he was afraid to think of her. He was afraid lest, in that cell of strained silence, he should forget himself and utter her name. It seemed to him that someone was listening at his door, that the date of trial and execution was purposely delayed in order that Jeanne's name might be wrested from him. If he should utter it they would find her, seize her, and torture her in a silent cell with soft walls. He did not know whether she had reached Moscow. Every time he was overcome by drowsiness he fought against it. Some people talk in their sleep. Suppose he should give himself away as he dozed? His head was full of that name, of nothing but that name, and he felt it was forcing its way out. He tried to relieve the tension by putting his face on his pillow and moving his lips as though saying, "Jeanne, dearest Jeanne, where are you?"

There came a day when the worst ordeal of all had to be faced. Andrew's counsel had requested M. Elie Renaud to question Gabrielle and Gaston once more. He compared their evidence and decided that on the chance of getting something he had better question Andrew again.

"Tell me, did you know the deceased man's niece?"

"No."

On returning to his cell, Andrew had been tormented by new conjectures. They suspected Jeanne. Why otherwise should the examining magistrate have asked him about her? They meant to catch her. What if she should return instead of waiting for him in Moscow? They would arrest her. How was he to warn her? So long as she was in Moscow, she was safe. Should he write to Zaharkevitch, "Let the girl live with you?" Should he say that Zaharkevitch was his brother-in-law? It made no difference, they would not forward a letter. What was he to do? She might come back. They would kill her.

Andrew's nerves gave way. For a second, the silence of Wing No. 4 was broken. Prisoners No. 96 and No. 98 were awakened by loud shouts. They did not understand the words. The words were in a foreign tongue.

Straining to the utmost, Andrew shouted, "Don't come back. Do you hear? Don't come back."

Warders slowly entered the cell. They carefully muffled his head in a towel and led him to Isolation Cell No. 3. They did not beat him, they did not even push him. They led him gently as though he were a little child. They knew that Prisoner No. 97 would in all probability be executed, and there must not be any bruises on a head which was soon to be cut off.

It was dark in the isolation cell. Biting his sleeve, Andrew moved his lips incomprehensibly. He wanted to say, "Jeanne, dear, dark Jeanne, don't come here. They will

kill you." But he remembered that he must not utter her name. He only moved his lips.

The Governor of the prison had every reason to be pleased. In the isolation cell, in the corridor, in the cells, in the entire Fourth Wing where men were waiting death, it was quiet, very quiet.

## XXXVII

### *Concerning Camels, and Also Concerning Aglaia*

How capacious that wonderful cup is! Six months had gone by since the last drop had filled it to the brim. Many more drops had since been added, and space had been found for all of them.

The muscles of the heart still functioned, rotten teeth still masticated food, cavernous lungs still inhaled oxygen. The consumptive woman whose cough had frightened the street boys was still alive in flat No. 34. She was still living, although she had only one lung. She was still living, although she was devoid of hope. She was still living, although her cup was full. There is universal astonishment at the endurance which enables the camel to cross the desert without a drop of water. There is universal amazement that a worm should be able to wriggle along after a gardener's spade has cut it in two. The persistence of Aglaia's life was quite as amazing.

Moscow was no longer famishing. Moscow was rapidly recovering. There was even talk about building a new house in the Tverskoi Boulevard. Neighbors were exchanging congratulations because the lavatories were functioning properly. The American correspondents were frightening their readers with accounts of military reviews in the Red Square. Insignificant beings, ordinary little folk, not those who make history but those out of whom history is made, were once more coming to life. Had those insignificant beings ever been allowed to write a constitution for them-

selves they would have embellished it with most surprising provisions. They would have proclaimed all sorts of "rights": the right to breathe, the right to sleep, the right to eat, to masticate, to digest, perhaps even the right to use those lavatories which, heaven be praised, were now functioning properly. And now they had obtained all those rights. They were, of course, glad. Side by side with them, dry, dispassionate men and women were going on with their own work. They knew that the contemplated house was not to be a cozy nest, but a base of operations for workers who were fighting on the Ruhr. Yet among the big and little folk who were busy over great and small affairs there were others who had no undertakings to keep them busy. They were the chips of the forest which had been felled, chips that were slowly rotting in the dirty corners of the great city.

If, out of ten camels crossing the desert, nine reach the oasis and one falls by the way, it would be foolish to reproach the desert. It is the nature of a desert to be hot and waterless. It is the nature of a camel to do without water.

Nechensohn had adapted himself. Nechensohn ate the breast of turkey. Aglaia did not go beyond herrings, even in her dreams, as though things were still as they had been, as though there were no new economic policy, no gold currency, no delicatessen shops with large windows. Before he left Moscow, Andrew had placed Aglaia in a "rest house" near the city. It had large airy rooms, and the patients had fresh creamy milk. But Aglaia would not stay there. She felt as though all the food in the accursed house had been cooked with serpents' fat. She supported her misery for a week and then ran away.

Aglaia was starved. Aglaia coughed. Aglaia had nothing to think about and nothing to hope for. She even gave up praying. When the Patriarch had been released from prison she had intended to go to the Donskoi Monastery for the



special celebration. But she had changed her mind. She had a personal blood feud with God. She had been afraid that she might lose her self-control and scream in the middle of the service. She had fits of that sort now: she would suddenly set up a terrible howl in the night. The landlord gave her notice to leave. When she crawled out boys shouted after her. Everyone was waiting to see just how long it would be before the tuberculosis destroyed what was left of her lungs. Aglaia herself was waiting for that, and she expected nothing else.

She sometimes had brighter moments. She would remember Andrew. She did not recall their quarrels, the misery of their last years, but she recalled the young man who had been as jaunty as a sparrow and had danced a mazurka with her. On such occasions the half-crazy woman, with her swollen legs, her thin plaits of uncombed hair, would start dancing in her narrow, dirty little room. That was always followed by one of her fits. When she had stopped dancing Aglaia would whisper blissfully, "Andrew, my sparrow." Then she would take out her locket with the portrait of her little daughter Sasha and would begin to scream hysterically.

Next day she would eat dry bread again and think of nothing. Days passed in that way; in that way months went by. Then there dawned a bright, sunny day in April, when something roused the half-dead Aglaia. She received two letters by the same post. The first was from her sister, the lucky Acia who lived in the quiet Passy district of Paris. Acia wrote:

"You know that I was always opposed to your marriage, but since you are married, your husband ought at least to support you, whereas you are starving in Moscow while he is living here in comfort. I am sure he is better off than I am. I go out very little, indeed I deny myself everything. But

yesterday a friend of mine, Hariton Ivanovitch Kritin, invited me to a dance hall called 'My-Boy,' which is the smartest place in Paris. And whom do you think I saw there? Your fine husband! Just imagine it! I should never have gone there if it had not been for Kritin. He was with some person, of course, one of 'those.' Can you imagine what he must be spending on this mistress? Paris is not Moscow. You must insist on his sending you parcels. If the Ara<sup>1</sup> has ceased functioning he must send them by post. It really is scandalous. I would help you myself but I am penniless. If it were not for Kritin I should be in the street. I do not go to a hairdresser now, I do my hair myself, and in Paris . . ."

The letter went on to discuss the latest Paris fashion in hairdressing, but Aglaia read no farther.

She hastily opened her other letter, as though looking to it for salvation. But it was only a letter from her old aunt Barbara, who had recently become a Latvian citizen and gone to live at Riga. What could Aunt Barbara have to write about unless that butter was dearer in Riga than in Moscow? Still, hardly knowing why, Aglaia began greedily to read her aunt's shaky scrawl. And she got her reward. On the fourth page she found what she wanted. Aunt Barbara wrote as follows:

"I have had a letter, dear Aglaia, from some friend of yours in Paris, a M. Nicholas Cislav. He asks after you, is worried about you, and wants to know whether you are in need of money. I have already written to him, addressing the letter *Poste Restante Toulon*, as he requested. I asked him to send you money, because if you have such a protector you can thank your lucky stars, and don't refuse

<sup>1</sup>Ara—American Red Cross Association.

the money in times like these. Butter has gone up again here. I really don't know how I manage to live at all. . . ."

Aglaia did not have hysterics, she did not cry. She put on her hat and took from a drawer a turquoise and pearl gold bracelet which had been hidden among her dirty linen. It had been hidden in the drawer for six years—six years of black revolution. Aglaia had often been breadless, but it had never entered her head to pull out that bottom drawer. For that bracelet, which had once adorned his mother's wrist, Andrew had given her on their wedding day. Andrew had placed it on her wrist, put it on with a smile, and then kissed her plump hand. Andrew had given up smiling later. Then the bracelet had found its way to that bottom drawer. Now Aglaia took it out. But she had no tears as she looked at the dull gleam of the pearls. On the contrary, she felt strong and energetic.

She could not recover her lost lung. But she was once more full of hope. She had an object in life, something worth living for. Aglaia would find Andrew. "Cislav" was, of course, none other than Andrew. False documents were printed in the Kremlin—German, American, anything you liked. Everyone knew that. And money? They printed counterfeit money, too. You don't believe it? Well, ask anyone you like, ask Darya Evlampievna at No. 14. Her nephew works there. They print any money you like. Andrew had been ready to go to any length for that creature. He might have become a counterfeiter himself. A pretty state of things. He was on the loose. But he was frightened all the same. Paris was not Moscow. Acia said that they had law and order there. Policemen all over the place. They were not like the Soviet's Communist Youth Band. In Paris they caught you in no time. Andrew would not escape there. In a well-ordered state, marriage was marriage. It

could not be destroyed, it was from God, not like a Soviet marriage. The French would give Andrew back to her. And they would put that little beast in prison. They would give her a yellow ticket. So there! When the lending library in Peter Street was functioning Aglaia had taken out a dreadful novel. She knew that such creatures were not patted on the head in Paris. They were even put into the St. Lazare Prison. Old nuns pinched them there. Quite right too, that was no sin, they deserved it. How many tears that good-for-nothing had made Aglaia shed! He was a nice one, too! Dancing hall, indeed! The very name showed you! Eating and laughing in a dancing hall—that must be some night bar, like the Strelna. Well, she'd show them! She was determined to gain her end. She would get her husband back.

Aglaia hastened to Ilinsk Street. Having made up her mind to go to Paris, she felt like a pilgrim of ancient Russia who, with a staff and a crust of bread, made her way through Ugría to the land of the Vlachs, to the town of Bar, to holy St. Nicholas. Aglaia had no use for passports. What sort of passports could a country have where everything—even the priests—was counterfeit? If she had a Bolshevik passport they would hang her as a spy the moment she crossed the frontier.

Aglaia made up her mind to crawl over the frontier secretly. With the money she got for her bracelet she bought American dollars and English notes. She got them from a friend who swore on the head of his son that the notes were not counterfeit, but genuine London notes which had even got a little soiled on their way to Moscow.

Aglaia went to Minsk, and there her troubles began. Uk-Zabotko, a bearded ruffian who made a business of smuggling runaways, caviar, and silk stockings over the frontier, took Aglaia into the forest. She walked briskly. She was not afraid. She knew that she was going to Andrew

and that she meant to have him. From time to time, however, she was racked by violent fits of coughing and obliged to stop. The whole forest then seemed to be filled with hoarse barking. Clots of blood flew out on to the moss. Uk-Zabotko looked round nervously.

"Here, shut up. They'll hear us. Keep it down. You'll have time enough to cough in Poland."

The moon rose. It was quiet, dank, melancholy. They were in the thick forest, near the invisible frontier, perhaps still in Russia, perhaps already in Poland. Suddenly Uk-Zabotko stopped. Aglaia waited but he did not move. At last he cleared his throat, pulled the peak of his cap over his eyes, and said in a low tone, "Give me the money."

"I've already given you what we agreed to."

"Give me some more, all you've got, or I'll leave you here."

"I haven't got any more."

"Then you won't get any farther. The Bolsheviks will finish you here."

Aglaia sat down on the moss. Raising her skirt, she began to fish out the English notes.

"Here, this is English."

"What good is that to me? Give me gold."

"This is all I've got."

Uk-Zabotko was getting tired of this conversation. He pulled impatiently at the chain of the locket which hung round Aglaia's neck.

"Here, give me this; is it gold?"

"It's my little daughter Sasha. She's dead, she—I can't give that up."

"Here, give it to me; I'll scratch off the painting."

The camel was crossing the desert. Aglaia was going to Andrew. She took off the locket, she kissed it tenderly, and handed it to Uk-Zabotko. But she suddenly felt that she



was losing Sasha forever, it was like a second funeral. Her baby was being taken from her, and, unable to bear it, Aglaia began to cry, quietly at first, then louder and louder. The noise filled the forest, like the cry of a wild animal.

"Stop your noise, you bitch. They'll hear."

Aglaia could not stop. It was one of her periodical paroxysms. The misty moon was cold, and frogs were croaking in the cold forest. Aglaia went on screaming. Then Uk-Zabotko kicked her with his great brown boot. And all was quiet; only the branches moaned. Uk-Zabotko quickly pushed his way through them. He was going home. He had earned his supper honestly.

## XXXVIII

### *The Pie Will Have Truffles In It*

MAY is lovely in Paris. All the lilies of the valley that flower in the woods of Brittany, Savoy, or the Pyrenees, the shy, gentle lilies sheltering under their dark green umbrellas, assemble in the Paris streets. A city with a Chamber of Deputies and a Stock Exchange, Paris is transformed for a month into a garden of lilies. Without scenting themselves, Paris ladies are perfumed with lilies as the whole of Paris is. That means that they do not use scent in May, and the perfumers suffer a considerable loss. But that cannot be helped. Even omnipotent manufacturers cannot prevent the advent of spring. In May all Paris rejoices. Workmen carry gay flags as they march along the streets, singing their most soul-stirring songs. Financiers go to the Longchamps races. Children sail whole armadas of brightly colored boats on the ponds of the Luxembourg Garden. Women fall in love. They look constantly at their watches lest they should be late for their rendezvous. Each day they do their hair differently in their desire to please their lovers. And the lilies—the lilies smell sweet.

M. Amedé Gourmot, the Paris barrister, had lilies on his desk, and they prevented him from concentrating on his work. Flowers ought not to be allowed to give forth their perfume on weekdays. Flowers hinder one when one is busy. It was not a magnificent basket of flowers sent by a rich, admiring lady client. No, M. Amedé Gourmot was still young and unknown. He was only just beginning his

career. His little nosegay had been given to him the day before by his mistress, Marie, who was a stenographer at the *Crédit Lyonnais*.

And now, sitting at his desk, M. Amedé Gourmot was thinking of Marie. Her body had had that same fragrance. It had been a good idea to give him lilies; they constantly reminded him of her. But of course it was only a temporary affair. Directly he had been briefed in a big case and made his name he would throw over simple little Marie. He would have mounted one rung of the ladder and would have an affair with a really elegant woman, not a typist but an actress, or even a lawyer's wife. But he must first rise in his profession. And he must work in order to do that.

M. Amedé Gourmot therefore pushed the lilies farther away from him. He picked up a pencil. He assumed a wise and keen expression. But immediately he rose and went to a mirror. He wanted to see whether he could make himself look thoughtful and sympathetic at one and the same time. Expression is highly important during a trial. To-morrow he would look just like that. Good! With a face like that he ought soon to become the most fashionable lawyer in Paris.

But he must do some work. M. Amedé Gourmot began to plan out the speech which he would make next day. He divided it into three parts: refutation of the evidence of the prosecution; his own version of the murder, and finally—and this was of the greatest importance—the social and psychological justification of the deed. He thought it all out in accordance with the rules of rhetoric. The pie was ready, nothing was lacking but the truffles. There was not a single striking metaphor that he could introduce anywhere in the speech. They really must have meant to ruin him, when they intrusted this defense to him. How unpleasant to appear in a case of which everything was known

in advance, so that the evening papers could safely print the verdict without so much as waiting for the reporters to ring them up. A verdict of "not guilty" was the only one which could make the name of M. Amedé Gourmot resound throughout France. But such a verdict would be a veritable miracle. The young lawyer did not drink absinthe, he did not take cocaine, nor was he Aglaia. So how could he believe in miracles? No, it would be futile to hope for such a verdict. A recommendation for mercy? It was doubtful. If only his client had been different! If, for example, he could have got some details from the idiot, something about his childhood: a cruel father who beat his wife and child, a drunkard who smashed the child's toys, an old mountebank, the child crying, trying to protect his mother, a terrible heredity, fearful memories of his boyhood. That would have been a trump card. But his client was a freak. It would be hard to find a better confirmation of Lombroso's theory. It was true that his ears had lobes, but his scowl, his obstinate silence!

The lawyer had tried in vain to obtain from the murderer information about the woman with whom he had been seen in the Avenue Kleber. Nothing was so effective as an element of romance. It made even the most hard-hearted of jurymen sniff sympathetically. Love—the desire to possess—crime—these were the foundations upon which were built all the most celebrated speeches in the legal textbooks. M. Amedé Gourmot could not hope to obtain a favorable verdict, nor even a recommendation for mercy. He could hope for only one reward. How splendid it sounds when the papers say: "The speech for the defence, which was delivered with great exaltation, was punctuated by the sounds of weeping." Feminine hysterics are to a young barrister what floral tributes are to a ballet dancer. M. Amedé Gourmot might achieve hysterics. It is true that he had never yet had

to defend a prisoner who was in danger of the death sentence. So far his practice had been confined to burglaries. But he knew that he could reduce the ladies of Paris to tears with ease. He had astonished Marie a day or two before by making a little speech, and what had happened? Marie had burst into tears. But the trouble was that he had no truffles—no childhood memories, no element of romance, no repentance.

M. Amedé Gourmot had had six interviews with his client. At the first of his interviews the degenerate fellow had begun trying to prove that he had had nothing to do with the murder, that he was a Russian Communist. What nonsense! A love affair, jealousy, gambling losses, might soften the heart of a juryman. But a brutal murder served up under a Communist sauce would be enough to infuriate the most good-natured of listeners. Did not the word Communist make M. Amedé Gourmot himself feel sick? The stupid rascals! They did not understand that everything in the world was arranged logically, satisfactorily, and that one must work to make a career; they sheltered themselves in their wrongdoing behind a political mandate, like a deputy. They were German hirelings, fools who had been expelled from school, asses, deserters, sweeps.

When the prisoner had asked the lawyer to give some very suspicious messages to his comrades in Moscow, the lawyer had indignantly interrupted him. A lawyer's duty, his professional duty, was to prove the innocence of clients even if he knew them to be guilty. But that did not mean that he must betray his country and help to carry out criminal conspiracies. M. Amedé Gourmot would never consent to anything of the sort. When the prisoner had heard the lawyer's reply he had lapsed into silence. The lawyer had visited him five times more. The murderer had remained silent. That had convinced M. Amedé Gourmot of his



idiocy. He obviously was unable to distinguish between counsel for the defence and counsel for the prosecution. He had tried to mislead him by dragging in Communistic principles, but when he had seen that the lawyer was not interested, he had lost his temper and refused to speak. It was an awful case to begin on.

That makes it easy to understand why M. Amedé Gourmot was so anxious about the composition of his speech. The evidence of the blind girl? Well and good. The coat? Splendid. Two or three moments of thrill. Then the prosecutor's impeccable logic. What next? Where were the truffles? Where were the hysterics? Every step was of importance at the opening of a career. There was not a moment to be lost. A year or two would pass, and he would be regarded as a pettifogger. And once that had come about, no matter what might happen, no matter what miraculous verdicts he might obtain, the public would only smile sarcastically, as they might smile at an old cart horse starting off at a trot. All would then be lost. To-morrow was a great day. To-morrow he would be playing for a high stake. He must do some work. M. Amedé Gourmot bit the end of his pencil. He drew little fir trees on a clean sheet of paper. He found it difficult to work. He was distracted by thoughts of other things. Marie was to come at eight. She was very piquant when she hid behind a curtain, ashamed to undress before him. Why was he thinking of Marie? He ought to be composing his speech. Ah, yes, those lilies of the valley!

M. Amedé Gourmot took the lilies and put them in the passage. But that was no good.

Perhaps he had better invent a romance? A mysterious heroine in a cloak? But what proofs could he produce? It would be useless without proofs.

His meditations were interrupted by a bell. It was too early for Marie. Who was there? It was a woman's voice. He

opened the door. A tall, bony woman, thin as the skeleton of a fish, dragged herself into his room. She wore a jacket made of a soldier's overcoat and an extremely ugly but coquettish hat trimmed with a bunch of grapes and a cock's feather. On entering the room, the woman fixed her troubled, unseeing eyes on M. Amedé Gourmot, and then fell heavily to the floor. She stretched out her long, dry arms, thin as a piece of rope, and began to howl, to howl so that everything on the writing table rattled.

"Save him, save Andrew!"

M. Amedé Gourmot was so taken aback that, instead of raising her from the floor or asking what she wanted or giving her a glass of water, he ran into the passage. He was so distraught that he began to smell the lilies of the valley, as though they had something to do with it and as though the wild screams did not concern him. The screams increased in volume. They reached the street, the bright May street, making the passers-by turn and stare in amazement. Fortunately his strange visitor seemed to be losing strength. Little by little she grew quiet.

How had she got there? How had she reached Paris after having been left in the forest three weeks ago by Uk-Zabotko? How had she traced Nicholas Cislav's evil footprints in this enormous city? Aglaia had set out to get her husband, and nothing could stop her. She might, of course, have died on the way; but she would die, journey or no journey. She had not died, Uk-Zabotko's boot had only left a big bruise on her chin, and when she had come to herself in the dank forest she had spat out blood and two front teeth. But she had recovered, and she had reached Paris.

She had gone straight from the station to her sister. Blood is thicker than water: Acia would help her. Acia occupied a small but comfortable flat. There was a Japanese bead curtain hanging on the door, and every time the door was

opened it tinkled musically. It gave Aglaia a merry welcome. Acia had been busily manicuring her long, slightly curved nails, covering them with a pink enamel. When she had caught sight of Aglaia it is true that she had not run out of the room as M. Amedé Gourmot did, but she had buried her face in her hands. She had taken in everything at a glance: the hat with its feather, and the face below the hat, that hollow, lemon-colored face with its swollen blue chin and the bright red patches on the cheeks that looked as though Aglaia had been using rouge. She had covered her face with her hands.

Aglaia had said in a whisper, "I've got here at last."

She had been determined to kiss her sister. She smiled naïvely with her toothless mouth. Acia had been frightened. There was a long silence, and then, as Acia calmed down a little, she had begun to reproach her sister. How could she have been so rash? What was she going to do in Paris? The cost of living was high. Acia had no money. Hariton Ivanovitch was not a millionaire, he could not support everybody. She would have done much better to remain in Moscow.

When Aglaia had explained the purpose of her journey Acia had smiled. "You'll find him, I don't think." But Aglaia knew that she would find him. Only she had not known how to explain to Acia that he was living there with counterfeit papers, that she had to look, not for Loboff, but for Cislav. Should she say that he was a Bolshevik? No, Aglaia could not bring herself to that. She was firmly convinced that all Bolsheviks were beheaded in Paris, and she wanted to get her husband back alive. She had been embarrassed.

"You understand the situation, don't you? The beast is hiding from me. Hiding with his lady love, so that I can't catch them. But I found out all about it from Aunt Barbara. He is not using his own name here but another——"

At that moment Acia's protector, the stout, good-humored Hariton Ivanovitch, entered the room. When he saw a woman so strangely attired he frowned and took Acia aside.

"Who is it?"

Acia crimsoned. They whispered. Then Hariton Ivanovitch said aloud, "Only under no circumstances here."

Then he turned to Aglaia. "Forgive me for interrupting you. Acia has told me something of your tragedy. What name is your husband living under here?"

"Cislav—Nicholas Cislav. That's the name he has invented, the wretch. A nice name! In place of Loboff."

Hariton Ivanovitch became thoughtful. He knew that name. He left the room and returned a moment later with a newspaper in his hand. There was the portrait of a man on the first page.

"Is that he?"

"Yes, that's Andrew. How did he get into the papers?"

"Your husband is a murderer. The only thing for you to do is to get a divorce."

Aglaia lay senseless for half an hour, which gave Acia and her lover time to discuss how they could get rid of this monstrosity that had descended upon them. When Aglaia had come to herself she immediately turned to Kritin.

"Heavens, what am I to do now? It's all due to that wicked woman. I'll scratch her eyes out. For the love of God, tell me where I ought to go? How can I help him? Perhaps they will let me see him? I am willing to do anything to set him free. I'll take him back. We'll pray together till his sin has been forgiven."

Hariton Ivanovitch and Acia were genuinely indignant. They had expected anything but this. What? She wanted to save a scoundrel like that? No, that was too much. Acia said impressively, "I can't understand you. We have talked

it all over, and Hariton Ivanovitch is kindly willing to help you for a little while. He offers to let you have a hundred francs. You will pay it back when you can. I will talk to some ladies I know. Perhaps I shall be able to find you some work. Mending or plain sewing. In any case you will not die of hunger. But you must forget that monster. He is a disgrace to you and to me. He is even a disgrace to our friend Hariton Ivanovitch."

Aglaia was not listening to her. She went on cackling incessantly: "What? What do you say? Desert my husband? Desert my Andrew? How can you suggest such a thing? I only want to know where I had better go: to the prison, or had I better hire a lawyer? When are they going to try him? Soon?"

Turning to Acia, Hariton Ivanovitch said in a pained tone, "What do you think of that? A nice sister you've got."

Acia answered, "She is no longer my sister."

Aglaia hurriedly rushed out, and as she passed the door it sang melodiously of comfort, of the peaceful happiness of Acia who had Hariton Ivanovitch, an honest man; neither a thief nor a murderer.

Aglaia spent several hours rushing all over Paris, from the Ministry to the police station, from the police station to the consulate. And at last she found the lawyer. She cried to him, to the only man from whom she could hope for any help, "Save him." But he had not answered. He had left the room.

When M. Amedé Gourmot heard that all was quiet in the study he at last made up his mind to leave the lilies of the valley, and trying to look unconcerned, as though nothing had happened, he went back and politely asked his caller to sit down. "I am at your service."

Aglaia knew French. She had learned it as a girl, when



she used to listen to the sounds of dance music which floated from the manufacturer's house. French had seemed to her something wonderful, not a language, but something that was a part of good society, like the *chaçonne*. She had read French novels. But that had been a long time ago. She had difficulty in searching her memory for words that were buried under bits of herring and potato peel. M. Amedé Gourmot, who was unaccustomed to talking to foreigners, was nervous and impatient. When Aglaia failed to understand him at once he thought that she was deaf. He raised his voice. Aglaia was afraid of him. This youth, who was trembling at the thought of the next day's trial like a schoolboy in anticipation of a difficult examination, appeared to her a merciless judge upon whom Andrew's fate depended. She tried to rouse his pity. As best she could she told him how they had danced the mazurka. M. Amedé Gourmot was writing down everything that she said, but at that point he dropped his pencil and whispered enthusiastically: "Splendid. Not a waltz, but a mazurka. That adds local color. The public will like that."

Then came the story of little Sasha. M. Amedé Gourmot's speech for the defence was becoming more vivid, more beautiful with every moment. But the tidbit was yet to come. And when Aglaia began to speak about the wicked woman who had come between them the young barrister, forgetting his manners, began to hum an aria from *Rigoletto* (the one about the inconstancy of woman). Aglaia was an angel who, at the eleventh hour, had come to help him. Of course her appearance was odd for an angel, but M. Amedé Gourmot was not going to kiss her. When he had heard Aglaia's story to the end, he asked, "Don't you know who she is?"

"No, I thought she was a Jewess, but my sister wrote that she was French. Perhaps she is a French Jewess."

M. Amedé Gourmot was completely satisfied. Overcoming a feeling of disgust, he pressed Aglaia's bony hand.

"Don't worry. I will do everything in my power. You will hear me to-morrow. The whole court will be in tears. The jury will be in tears." Then, suddenly remembering, "Yes, one more question. Why does your husband drag politics into the case? It can only do him harm. Was he really ever a Communist at any time?"

Aglaia knew that Paris was not Moscow. Order reigned here. Communists got their heads cut off, and wishing to save Andrew she answered passionately: "No, no, what are you thinking of? He was so quiet, so good. It was that woman who egged him on."

A bell rang. Marie! M. Amedé Gourmot hastily said good-bye to Aglaia. The two women met in the entrance hall. Marie smelled of lilies of the valley. What did Aglaia smell of? Of the wet cloth of her soldier's coat? Of railway smoke? Or, perhaps, of grief? Grief has its own smell, an acrid, heavy smell.

M. Amedé Gourmot was smiling. He was pleased with life. He said to Marie, "You are not going to undress behind the curtain to-day, little one, but here. What? You are ashamed? I like that! I am in a heavenly mood to-day. The weather alone makes life worth while. It really is May, the month of love and lilies of the valley. And besides, I have done a good day's work. You will hear me to-morrow. The very walls of the court will weep. It won't be just a simple pie. No, little one, I have found what I wanted. I have found the truffles."

## XXXIX

### *May Is Beautiful Everywhere*

PERHAPS May is beautiful not only in Paris but everywhere. Perhaps it is beautiful even in the Nenashev forest. But it did not seem so to the dark Southern girl, who had been born in far-away Loirette with its wealth of grapevines and wisteria.

She went out of doors. It was still light in spite of the lateness of the hour. Dead pine needles made the ground red under the trees. Gnats were swarming over the tiny kitchen garden, so numerous that the air was like a piece of floating muslin. There was a smell of dampness and burning moss. Desolate nature! Terrible country! There was something depressing in this climate, in this long, severe winter, during which man was forced to hide in his lair, not even daring to breathe, since his breath instantly turned to steam, his eyelashes were covered with frost, and icicles formed on his nostrils. The smoking lamps were lighted nearly all day long. The dwelling places were swathed in snow. Human beings moved slowly, heavily. Covered with hood, sheepskins, and felt footwear, they no longer resembled human beings but monsters. Then the sun appeared for two or three months, behaving like a low bully in a drinking den. It wanted to make up for lost time. It raged day and night like one possessed. Heat, forest fires, the monotonous hum of insects. It is a huge country, a terrible country. It is not like Loirette. Grapes do not grow here. There is no new wine, nor are there any gay Auvergnois or boastful Gascons.

Here the people perspire from hot tea, drink raw spirits out of mugs, and then fight till the blood flows from their broken noses. It is a long way from Paris, a very long way. Still, even here, May is beautiful, or at least so the books say. Jeanne did not think so.

Jeanne was not happy in the Nenashev woods. Nechensohn never made mistakes, and he had not made one when he entrusted Jeanne to Kabotinsky. The ferrety Pole knew his business. When Jeanne had arrived she had asked with surprise: "But where is the school? Where are the children?"

Kabotinsky had run his bug-colored eyes over her and, smacking his lips, had answered, in his sibilant voice, "There are no children. Now, if you get married, there will be. But what do you want with children? You are a child yourself. However, if you are bent on earning your living, so to say, we can find you something to do in the office."

Weary weeks followed. Jeanne made copies of papers which Kabotinsky threw into the waste-paper basket without so much as glancing at them. There was no one there except Anisim, the deaf watchman, and Kabotinsky himself, who grew more importunate every day. Jeanne felt that nothing ever changed in her life unless it was the voice: Raymond Ney had a bass, Kabotinsky's voice was high pitched, but the words were the same, and so were the eyes. In both cases the whites of their lewd eyes grew yellow and clouded, like clots of sour cream.

But it was not that that made Jeanne suffer. Kabotinsky went once a week to fetch the post. He would bring back newspapers and thick yellow envelopes from the Timber Trust. But there were no letters for Jeanne. She made allowances for everything: Andrew had had no time to write, he had been too busy; the distance between Toulon and Nenashev was very great. She waited patiently, but when

six weeks had gone by, her longing turned into anxiety. Andrew had been arrested. She must go to him, go as soon as possible. She told Kabotinsky so. "You can't go now. The snow is melting, and the roads are impossible. You'll have to wait a fortnight. But I'll think about it. I'll arrange it all."

And Kabotinsky really did think about it. He also began to arrange something. Two days later a woman with a stutter came to the office. She wanted someone to help her to obtain a grant, her husband's leg having been crushed by a falling tree. Jeanne was glad to have something to do. She listened attentively and promised to speak to Kabotinsky about it. Then the woman produced a small bag of sugar: "Here's some sugar for you. I hope you'll enjoy it."

Jeanne was astonished. How did the woman know that she had no sugar? Jeanne had once asked Kabotinsky where she could get some. Perhaps he had told her? Jeanne wanted to pay for the sugar, but the woman refused to accept any money and went her way, mumbling something to herself. In the evening, when Jeanne was drinking tea with that same sugar, Kabotinsky came in and exclaimed, as he wiped his forehead, "Oh, I'm worn out. You ought to thank me. I was hardly able to save you. They wanted to take you away to prison to-day."

"What for?"

"For taking bribes. The sugar. That woman was a spy from the Cheka. I had difficulty in persuading them to leave you in peace until the trial. But you must not think of going away. I have given a written guarantee that you will not leave."

"It is impossible. It is a misunderstanding. I offered her money. I shall go there myself and explain everything."

"You won't go anywhere. I have vouched for you. I won't give you horses under any pretext. Wait till you are sum-



moned. But don't upset yourself, child. You'll only spoil your complexion. It will all be cleared up sooner or later, and meanwhile you can go on living here. What's wrong with the place? You'd be worse off in prison, I can tell you. There are black beetles in the prison. And you have my society here. I won't let you be dull. You can see how devoted I am to you. Be a little kinder to me. I am burning up with passion. If you go into a confectioner's shop in Warsaw it will not be like Moscow; it is a regular flower garden, full of pretty women. And you know, I'll bet anything that even there you would be a success. Don't pout. Lips weren't made for that; they were made to be kissed, like that——"

And quickly bending down, the nimble Pole kissed Jeanne. It is true that he got nothing more, and was immediately driven from her room. But then Kabotinsky had achieved all that mattered and could rely upon Nechensohn's gratitude.

It was so that Jeanne's worst sufferings began. She knew that she ought to go, but how could she? On foot? But it was eighty versts through thick forest to the station. She did not know the way. She would never get there. Should she write to Zaharkevitch? Kabotinsky would never post the letter.

Jeanne finally decided to ask the watchman to post a letter for her, without letting Kabotinsky know, when he was sent to the station. But how was she to do it? He was stone deaf. But she did it nevertheless. She talked to Anisim with her hands, she spoke with her eyes, she spoke with her heart. The deaf Anisim understood. He took her tiny letter, stained with the traces of tears. In that letter Jeanne swore to Zaharkevitch that she had not accepted bribes. She begged him to save her for Andrew's sake.

Several more weeks passed. There was no answer from Zaharkevitch. There was no letter from Andrew. Jeanne

felt that she was dying. Her hands were weak. She could hardly rise from her bed. She had horrible dreams. The everlasting hum of the gnats reduced her to tears. Day and night the sun wandered over the leaden sky. The forest was filled with the smell of burning. It was already the middle of May. One evening Jeanne left the house. She had made up her mind to run away. She wanted to drown in the boggy swamp. What was there to live for? She felt that Andrew had perished. They had one heart, and now her heart stood still. It would no longer beat. It was the end. A terrible end! Accursed land!

But Jeanne had barely left the house when Anisim ran after her, caught her by the arm, and led her back. On the porch there was a young man in a leather coat, carrying a shabby dispatch case.

"Are you Comrade Ney? I am from the Cheka."

What did this mean? Had they come to arrest her? They hadn't allowed her to get a hundred yards from the house, a hundred yards nearer to Andrew. They hadn't allowed her to drown in the swamp. Comrade Shabloff, of the District Cheka, gazed at this little woman in amazement. What was it all about? Was she mad?

"What's the matter, Comrade?"

Jeanne did not answer. Let them take her to prison. Let them take her quickly. She could not help it if he believed that she accepted bribes. What was the good of arguing or denying? She was tired; too tired to live. She wanted to disappear in that eerie forest, in the misty bog. She was silent. Shabloff cried impatiently: "Well, what's it all about? Why don't you answer?"

Still Jeanne was silent. Comrade Shabloff had no use for psychology. You must have plenty of free time if you want to study the subtleties of the soul. And though the day contains twenty-four hours for all alike, and though,

to tell the truth, Comrade Shabloff was often so bored that he would amuse himself by counting how many times in succession he could yawn, or would give himself up to abstract meditation as to why no single word in the Russian language began with "Y," he considered himself a very busy man, and as such, he did not like having to ask the same question twice. Was he not the founder of the local branch of the Time League? How could he stand there wondering why this woman would not speak? He said simply: "Well, you can come with me if you like. Get your things."

Jeanne did not argue. This man was taking her to prison. Well, let him take her.

They drove along in silence. They drove past the bog in which Jeanne had not been permitted to remain. They had gone about twenty versts before Shabloff could make up his mind to speak to this strange woman.

"Are you going to Moscow, Comrade?"

He was mocking her. He was taking her to prison, but he talked of Moscow, which was only four days from Andrew. Andrew was not dead. He was expecting her. But Jeanne was being taken to prison.

"Comrade Zaharkevitch said in his letter that you wanted to go to Moscow."

Then Jeanne clutched the leather sleeve. Then Jeanne laughed. She thanked Shabloff. She tried to explain something and talked all the time about a comrade from the International who was working in France, and a bag of sugar. Shabloff could not understand any of it. They drove another ten versts before he began to understand.

"But what a child you are! How could you believe such rubbish? That Kabotinsky would not dare to come anywhere near the Cheka. He's been in prison four times, the beast, but nothing has any effect on him. Well, we won't let him out so soon next time. Don't forget to tell Comrade

Zaharkevitch about that Nechensohn. They are all in one gang. But how on earth was it you did not guess at once? Really, Comrade, you are a child."

Comrade Shabloff was twenty years old, so that Jeanne had more right to call him a child. But Comrade Shabloff considered himself extraordinarily grown up. He would say, "You are a child," even to the Commissar of Education, who not only had children but was shortly expecting a grandchild. Comrade Shabloff thought he knew everything, that he was surrounded by babes and had to teach them everything. He said the word "child," however, with a kindliness which was unusual for him. Jeanne's story about Andrew had touched him, although he regarded love as a survival from bourgeois culture. He was moved, although it is true he was annoyed with himself for being so sentimental. He said affectionately, "Well, you'll be in Moscow on Thursday."

Jeanne would be in Moscow on Thursday! Then on Monday or Tuesday she might be at Toulon. She would be with Andrew. She would find him. If he were in prison, she would go there. She would see him.

They were driving through the forest, and Jeanne now looked without enmity at the fir trees, the leaden sky, the gloomy landscape. Was there not something touching in this brief summer, like a fleeting moment of happiness in life of an austere man? This summer was like that hour in the Luxembourg Garden, when Jeanne had laughed and been care free. Sweet summer, sad, luminous summer—one could love it, pity it, cherish it, as one does a sick child. Little, short-stemmed, unsightly white flowers peep out here in May. How much those flowers mean after eight months of snow! Loirette has its vines and its wisteria. There are those in the world who are happy. But who can tell what that one night in the hotel room in the Rue Odessa had meant for Jeanne?

One short night in that miserable hole! Jeanne looked lovingly at this poverty-stricken May. Does not a child prize a clay bird above all its mechanical toys, does he not derive more pleasure from it, may he not love it with tenderness?

Jeanne smiled at this exotic spring. The month of May is beautiful everywhere.



## XL

### *Much Sorrow, Much Love*

JEANNE was on her way with Zaharkevitch to the Vindavsk Railway Station. She had spent only two days in Moscow. But what days they had been! Life had not been too kind to Jeanne. Like the Nenashev forest, she had known what winter meant. And now a sad, pallid Nenashev spring had begun for her. It had begun at the moment when a latent softness had made itself heard in Comrade Shabloff's artificially harsh voice. Jeanne had burst into tears, thereby astounding Comrade Shabloff, who knew everything but did not know what to do when one cried. It was like a spring flood. After her uncle and Gaston, after M. Kabotinsky, she suddenly found beside her a man whose simple human sympathy could not be smothered either by mandates, or leather coats, or the rules of the Time League. Zaharkevitch was a kind, bat-eared nurse. Yes, there were other things in Moscow besides Deviatinsky Street, Nechensohn and gold coins. Zaharkevitch was in Moscow, and there must be many like him. The lusters at the Empire could not shine more brightly than Jeanne's soft, bright eyes. Of course, at Theodosia in 1920, where there had been only one lamp on the Quay, their light had been more striking than it was in brilliant Moscow. But they shone, for all that.

When Jeanne saw Zaharkevitch's room she had been struck by its poverty. Even Bella, the beloved Bella, had worn-out shoes. That was not due to such stinginess as had

characterized M. Raymond Ney. But the brighter the lustres at the Empire, the more numerous the turkeys consumed by Comrade Nechensohn, the humbler must be the life of Zaharkevitch within its four gray walls. Zaharkevitch did not ask himself whether the lustres at the Empire were necessary. He was too busy with his work. One man cannot think about everything. Apparently the lustres were necessary.

Jeanne's arrival had given him great joy. He had thought about her often in his moments of leisure, but he had never dared hope that the dark-haired foreign girl would return to Russia. When Zaharkevitch had come back from the Don coal fields he had found a tiny letter waiting for him, which bore traces of tears. It had filled him with happy excitement. He had written to Shabloff. And here she was in Moscow. It was delightful. It was very delightful.

But Zaharkevitch knew that no one was in the least interested in his joy. Jeanne expected him to help her. He did not talk to her about his feelings. It was only by the loving, dog-like devotion with which his eyes followed Jeanne that one could guess what was going on in his mind. But Jeanne had no time for guesses. It was all spent in running about Moscow in the effort to get news of Andrew.

Zaharkevitch himself grew anxious. There had been no letter from Andrew for three months. He inquired at the International headquarters, but they knew nothing there. It was possible that Andrew had been arrested somewhere in the provinces and had been unable to communicate with the French comrades. But though he thought this he tried to comfort Jeanne. All sorts of things might have happened: he might have been too busy, or his letters might have got lost. Had not one of the Russian couriers been arrested? He comforted her as though she were a child, as he com-

forted Bella when she fell down and hurt her nose. They would be certain to meet before long.

The love of Jeanne and Andrew filled Zaharkevitch with tender sympathy. It seemed to him extraordinarily beautiful. He loved them both. He loved their love, so sweet, so exalted, so purified by danger and illuminated by sorrow, as a theater is lighted up by limelight. He rejoiced for them. He grieved for them. He wanted Jeanne to go, in order that they might the sooner be together. Compared with their love, his own seemed unworthy, paltry, beggarly. Was he really capable of love? And Zaharkevitch grew angry with himself and hardly dared look at Jeanne. Who was there to explain to him that he was wrong, that it was precisely he, funny, bat-eared Zaharkevitch, who knew how to love as only children and heroes loved, whose love has given birth to legends. There was, of course, no one. Zaharkevitch would never have dared waste anyone's time with the story of his foolish heart.

He went everywhere with Jeanne, and everywhere they inquired about Andrew. Everywhere Jeanne met with sympathy and kindness. At the International headquarters there was a hard, sarcastic man who had been expelled from every country in the world in turn, as though he were not a man but a plague or a bomb. When he heard Jeanne's request, he dropped his ironical smile, and simply, humanly, with a trace of sadness in his voice, said as he approached her, "Go. Here are some addresses for you. Rouse up everybody."

She had not known that man. He had not even asked who she was. She found the same spirit in the clerk at the Commission for Foreign Affairs when she asked him to stamp her passport at once. Everyone listened to her, everyone was sorry for her. This French girl, this foreigner, no longer felt herself an alien in Moscow. Nowhere else in the world

was such love shown as they showed in Moscow, that bitter town which had gone through such terrible years, where every family had known sorrow and death.

It was a warm, still evening when Jeanne drove to the station with Zaharkevitch. His eyes comforted her. Jeanne was taking leave of the city. She gazed at the budding green of the boulevards, at the lights in the Kremlin, at the street urchins playing pitch and toss, at the old woman hobbling along, at all that wild, absurd, wonderful town, the most vicious, the most heroic, the most grim and embittered of all towns—the new town.

Jeanne felt sure now that nothing had happened to Andrew. In a few days she would see his smile, his broad, bright smile, that reminded her of Moscow.

There was a whole hour remaining before the train would start. Zaharkevitch had disappeared, probably to get her ticket. Jeanne was sitting in the refreshment room. After looking carefully around to see that there were no porters about, an elderly man came up to her and said nervously, "Perhaps you will allow me to carry your luggage?"

Jeanne raised her eyes and gave a little cry.

"Nicholas Ilyitch?"

"Yes, but who are you? Why, surely it's not Jeanne? Why, I should never have recognized you. You were still a little girl—do you remember how we used to play dominoes?"

It was a lawyer, Nicholas Ilyitch Sokolov, who had been her father's official legal adviser, standing before her. His son, an elegant young fellow, had been one of those who had sent roses from Noeff's shop and had disappeared in that October storm.

"Dear Nicholas Ilyitch, I am so glad to see you. But why——?" Jeanne did not finish her question. Nicholas Ilyitch understood, however. He told her why. Yes, Mos-

cow had been through much tribulation in the last few years. Nicholas Ilyitch told her a common Moscow story. He had been deprived of everything. He had been imprisoned. But, most dreadful of all—his son Boris. Perhaps Jeanne remembered him? He was an officer. Well, they had shot him. Now Nicholas Ilyitch was alone and out of work. He had at one time had a post in the Commission of Agriculture, but the staff had been cut down. The camel was crossing the desert. It is proverbial that "one must live." Nicholas Ilyitch assisted passengers to alight from carriages, or carried their luggage if it was not too heavy. But it was risky—if the porters caught one doing it, a fuss was made: there was a report and an investigation by a commissar. Yet one must live. Nicholas Ilyitch was living.

"But all this is very dull. Let's talk about something else. How are you? You are quite grown up, and much prettier, a regular beauty, really. Where are you going? Abroad? Are you married or are you in no hurry about that?"

Jeanne answered him affectionately. She told him about her father's death, the bureau in the Rue Thiboumery. Nicholas Ilyitch listened with attention. He nodded rhythmically, like a grandfather, "I understand, I understand," and with so much kindness that Jeanne told him all about Andrew without thinking what she was doing. Jeanne was going to him. Perhaps he had been arrested?

It was only after she had done speaking that Jeanne realized what she had done. What had made her tell him all about it? Nicholas Ilyitch was a dear; he was fond of her. But how could he understand? He was old. He was as old as Papa. The Bolsheviks were brigands from his point of view. He had lost more than his home and fortune: he had lost his son. From his point of view Andrew was an enemy. Jeanne shrank into herself. She was afraid, afraid even to look at Nicholas Ilyitch. There was silence for a minute,



perhaps longer. Then, taking Jeanne's hand with affection, Nicholas Ilyitch said, "I am on the other side, you know. I stick to the old principles. They may be right. I do not know. I go to church. But that does not matter. Everyone has his own opinions, yet when calamity comes it is the same for all of us. I am very sorry for you. I know. When Boris was waiting—— But, please God, everything will be all right. Even if he should be sentenced to imprisonment, he might be exchanged for a French prisoner. If I were in Paris I would defend him myself in memory of old times. Still, there are plenty of lawyers there without me. The main thing is that you should not worry. Perhaps he has not even been arrested, and letters have simply gone astray."

Jeanne's eyes filled with tears. She felt that her heart was overflowing with love, that she had much, very much, to say. But she could not say a word. Zaharkevitch came up: it was time to go. She said good-bye to Nicholas Ilyitch. She left unsaid all that was filling her heart. But, as Nicholas Ilyitch was embracing her, he felt a warm tear fall on his hard, coarsened hand. He understood everything.

That meeting was Moscow's last word. Up to that time Jeanne had thought they had been kind to her because they were Communists; Andrew was their comrade. She now realized that there was something more. She seemed to understand everything. She was breathless with pain. She was breathless with joy.

Zaharkevitch had been to the baker's. He brought Jeanne some jam pasties. With his dog-like eyes he gazed at the carriage window, at which Jeanne's face appeared. He was very sad. He would have liked to give Jeanne his heart together with the pasties. He no longer knew what to do with his stupid heart. But what did Jeanne want with it? He murmured, full of solicitude, "Mind you don't catch cold

on the journey. I hope you'll like those pasties; it's cherry jam."

The engine was about to start. Moscow was already in the past.

"Zaharkevitch, come here," shouted Jeanne. "Come here, quick."

Jeanne wanted to kiss him. The window was high, and Jeanne kissed his protruding ear instead of his cheek. Jeanne did not feel that it was funny. She felt sad. Sad but happy.

"I love you, Zaharkevitch. I love Moscow. Zakarkevitch, dear Zaharkevitch, I love everybody."

## XLI

### *A Dull Affair*

IN THE dim corridor of the law courts, M. Amedé Gourmot paused for a moment before a small looking glass. He was feeling almost sick with agitation. Moreover, he had not had enough sleep. One should not invite women on weekdays: like flowers, they only prevented one from working. M. Amedé Gourmot's hands still smelt of lilies of the valley, and his head was buzzing with a plethora of words. But would it be a real speech? He ought not to have spent the night with Marie. Of course, he had got the truffles, but would he get the hysterics? M. Amedé Gourmot gazed at himself in the mirror with the uncertainty of a young actor making his début. He did not look bad, his gown and beretta suited him and gave him a look of concentration, almost of solemnity. Of course he would get the hysterics.

So thought M. Amedé Gourmot. But one of the ushers who was watching him thought otherwise. That disrespectful usher even guffawed—the young man's appearance made him laugh. Picture a somewhat stupid, self-satisfied face, with tiny eyes and a very carefully waxed little mustache, all this being crowned by a cap fit for a masquerade. Imagine a little Frenchman, the most insignificant little Frenchman, a typical Frenchman from Bordeaux or Toulouse, picture him in a gown such as alchemists and inquisitors wore in the Middle Ages. Picture him striking various antique attitudes. Picture all that, and you will understand the usher's behavior.

M. Amedé Gourmot, however, paid no attention to the guffaw. He knew that the gown was becoming. He knew, that he would evoke hysterics. And he entered the dim court with pride.

Nearly everyone had arrived. The gray-haired public prosecutor, an irritable man who seemed always to be annoyed with something or other, was seated at his table. He was a martyr to circumstances. Someone was always mixing up the sheets of his briefs, or a trouser button would fly off, or his pencil would break at the most critical moment, or it rained when it ought not to. In a word, he was unlucky. It was, perhaps, because he was angry with everything in the world that he had become a public prosecutor. Even outside the walls of the court he was a prosecutor. If his dinner was a quarter of an hour late, he would make a whole speech to his wife, coldly and methodically proving, point by point, the faults and frivolity of the woman who, while living on her husband's earnings, could yet allow him to starve. It was shameful and criminal. No; there were no extenuating circumstances. He was ready to make accusations against everyone and everything, even his broken pencil. The drawing of indictments was not his profession merely, it was his nature. When a jury found for the defendant, he felt annoyed in the same way that a good musician is annoyed by a false note in the orchestra. But he had no anxiety on this occasion. There could be no question of an acquittal. The facts of the case spoke for themselves. As for his adversary, M. Amedé Gourmot, he could inspire nothing but pity in the public prosecutor's breast. It was, on the whole, stupid to be an advocate. To be forever defending obvious rogues was a crime for which the barristers themselves should really be in the dock. Besides, this young fellow was a buffoon, showing off with his mountains of papers. What could he have in them? It could

certainly be nothing new about the case; the evidence was as clear as day. Mere words, then, silly, pompous words. The public prosecutor despised words, the public prosecutor despised M. Amedé Gourmot. Yawning ill-temperedly, he awaited the arrival of the president. He wanted the murderer to be condemned to death as quickly as possible. To dawdle over a case like this would be as blameworthy as to be late with the dinner.

The jury sat on the left. They were feeling uncomfortable. They were those members of the audience whom the conjuror asks to step on the stage to vouch for his trick with the top hat or the magical box. They were sitting as we see people sitting in old photographs, very straight, their stomachs protruding, their hands on their knees. They realized their own importance as they looked round the court which was filled with the ordinary public. The feeling was pleasant but embarrassing. The whole show was really meant for them. The prosecution and the defence would each in turn exercise upon them its powers of persuasion. The whole court, faint with excitement, would await their verdict. And just for that reason it was important that they should assume an air at once philosophical and natural. That was no easy matter. The jury had never had anything to do with philosophy. They were, for the most part, small shopkeepers, and only two of them felt pride in their education and knowledge of human psychology. They were a teacher of calligraphy at St. Paul's School and an inspector of the Phoenix Fire Insurance Company. But in neither pose nor expression did either of them differ from his fellows. The jurymen had arrived early. It was some time before the proceedings began. They gradually grew more accustomed to their rôles and sat more at ease. There was really nothing terrifying about it. It was not so difficult as it had seemed at first sight to convict or acquit a man.



They were even beginning to talk quietly to one another about extraneous subjects. One of the shopkeepers was complaining about the rise in the window tax. The inspector was explaining to his neighbor all the advantages of the new insurance policies against theft. Each of them had his own business, his own life, from which the trial was something wholly apart.

At last the president appeared. M. Alphonse Cremier was a good-natured old man, very absent-minded, an excellent husband and father, and a passionate lover of canaries. He came here every day and reluctantly listened to the case for the prosecution and the evidence on both sides, and occasionally growing aware that something improper was being said, he would tinkle his bell. He revived somewhat if a witness proved amusing. If the verdict was an acquittal, he smiled good-naturedly: excellent. If the prisoner was found guilty, he tried to make his effeminate, lymphatic face look severe: it could not be helped, it was a pity, but such was the law. But generally speaking, he was bored. He could not understand why both sides should get so excited. What did it matter whether a man was acquitted or convicted? M. Alphonse Cremier sat at that table every day, and every day someone was either convicted or acquitted. He sat there without interest, thinking of his children playing at diablo, or of his canaries, those little yellow birds that hopped on their perches, chirruped happily, and did not have to preside at trials.

M. Alphonse Cremier wiped his eyeglasses with his handkerchief: the proceedings had begun.

The prisoner sat behind M. Amedé Gourmot on a high bench, between two gendarmes. He sat quite still. His face expressed nothing but unutterable weariness. The noise of the court deafened him after the silence of Wing No. 4. He quickly examined the public seats. Into his head, heavy

with the long strain of silence, had come a mad thought: Was Jeanne here? That was, of course, impossible. Jeanne was far away. He did not wish her to be here. If she were to show herself she would be arrested. Ah, but he did wish it. He had subconsciously longed for it. There was no ground for his hope, but what if suddenly——? He felt no interest in the trial. After his interviews with the examining magistrate and with his lawyer he had realized that it was impossible to convince such people with voice or eyes or heart. He knew beforehand what the verdict would be, as well as M. Amedé Gourmot, as well as anybody in the court knew it. He had lost all hope. He was ready to die. He had only one desire left, a small but impossible desire: he wanted to see Jeanne once more. Not to be alone with her, not even to talk to her, but just to see her from afar, to find her dark eyes in that big hall.

Andrew's eyes darted restlessly about the court during the reading of the indictment. Hundreds of eyes met his: strange eyes, some hostile, some indifferent. The public were not listening, either: they were examining the prisoner. As the murderer was guarded by two gendarmes, they had no fear. They looked at him much as visitors to the Zoo look at the wild beasts. If the ladies had been nearer his high bench, they would perhaps have poked at him with the tips of their umbrellas. But as they were at least a dozen paces away, they had to be satisfied with their lorgnettes. When their dull, avid eyes met his, Andrew's eyes quickly turned away. But they immediately resumed their search for Jeanne. Jeanne was not there. And, having abandoned all hope, Andrew's eyes fell to unplumbed depths—he saw nothing.

He answered the judge's questions mechanically. Witnesses appeared and disappeared: the man who had arrested him, another man whom he did not know, with an eroded

nose, who snuffed and was very businesslike, but utterably loathsome. His interest was roused slightly by the mention of Jules Lebeau's name. Mlle Fallette, the late writer's house-keeper, a little woman with a bird-like face, was being examined. She stated that no one had visited Jules Lebeau during his last six months. She was not lying: on the day that Andrew had visited the great writer, Mlle Fallette had gone to the Louvre to do some shopping. Everyone pricked up his ears at her evidence. The public prosecutor was pleased, and his pleasure was quite natural. Counsel for the defence, on the other hand, was agitated although he had known in advance what she was going to testify. He was agitated because if the prisoner were proved to have told barefaced lies, it might so affect the jury that no eloquence on the part of M. Amedé Gourmot would make the slightest impression on them. M. Alphonse Cremier stopped thinking about his birds. This old woman was associated with great French literature, she had lived in the same house as Jules Lebeau. That interested the cultured judge, and it interested the public.

As for Andrew, he now realized for the first time how much the death of Jules Lebeau affected his own fate. If he had not died, Andrew would have been acquitted; indeed, he might never have been put on trial. On that wintry day, in the study so rich in old books and old idols, Andrew had little thought that his life was bound by inseparable ties to that of the ironical old man. It had not been only Jules Lebeau who had died at the open window on that March night. Andrew realized that now. He did not notice the formal little curtsey which Mlle Fallette made to the president as she withdrew. Nor did he at first notice the new witness who had been called. When at last he raised his eyes he was startled. It was she. Jeanne had told Andrew so much about her. Jeanne had told him how they two

had driven out with Pouatras to call on happiness. M. Elie Renaud had not brought them face to face because he had been afraid that Andrew would know how to change his walk. He had kept Gabrielle in the background.

At this first glimpse of the blind girl, Andrew smiled. Even the public prosecutor was helpless in the presence of that face. Frowning, he screened himself with a sheet of paper. But the judge and the jury and the public, looking at the girl's beautiful face, smiled sympathetically. The court was, for the moment, turned into a children's theater, where not only witches and ogres, but angels with pink waxen wings, make their appearance.

Having told of that awful night, of the struggle in the study and the finding of her father's body, Gabrielle was silent. The president asked her if she wished to say anything else. Then the blind girl said, "I wish to ask what has become of my cousin? Was she killed, too? She disappeared that night. She never said a word to me about going away."

M. Alphonse Cremier did not answer. He suggested that counsel on both sides should question her. The public prosecutor said in a grumbling, peevish voice: "Tell me, witness, your cousin was quite happy, wasn't she? She hadn't any cause to feel discontented with your father's treatment of her?"

"I don't know. I am very stupid. I do not know anything about life. But I think that some lives are unhappy. Jeanne used to come to me with wet cheeks."

The public prosecutor had expected a totally different answer. He remembered the evidence given by Gaston Poux. He had foreseen that counsel for the defence might spring on the court something concerning the strange disappearance of the murdered man's niece, and he had wanted to safeguard himself against that. He was irritated by the blind girl's evidence. He even broke a pencil. This, of course, had

not altered the essentials of the case, but it gave his opponent a chance of interesting the jury for a moment in some idiotic version of the affair. The prosecutor knew what to think of barristers: they were a stupid and dishonest lot.

It was the turn of counsel for the defence to cross-examine the witness. M. Amedé Gourmot portentously produced a card, and, as he had such poor cards, even this one seemed to him to be a trump.

"On what grounds, witness, did you affirm in the preliminary examination that the murderer and the prisoner were not one and the same person?"

"I can hear. You must believe me. I am blind. I am worse off than other people. My eyes are not like yours. But I do hear people. I do not know this man. But I do know that he was not in the study. That man walked differently, quite differently. Perhaps I am talking nonsense, but I give you my word that it was not he."

Well, of course, Gabrielle's evidence carried no weight. It would be difficult to acquit or exonerate anyone on such testimony. But M. Amedé Gourmot had not been wrong in considering it a trump card. There was a silence. If the prosecutor had put down the paper which obscured his view, he would not have recognized the court. Once more he would have been convinced of the criminal frivolity of human beings. Could the word of a blind girl destroy facts? Does a letter cease to be a letter? Then why had the jury begun whispering to each other? Why did a murmur of sympathy fill the court? Why did M. Amedé Gourmot look round with that cocky air, as though he were surveying a battlefield? The mood of the public was obviously changing. The curious and wondering eyes with which they watched Andrew had lost their earlier gleam of anger. Somebody even whispered to his neighbor: "What if this should be a judicial error?" Something incomprehensible was happening.



A blind girl's undemonstrable word had been thrown into the scale, and what had followed? It had outweighed the scale laden with the mackintosh, the photograph, and all the blue folios of the case. Noting this dumb, but significant, tension, M. Alphonse Cremier thought lazily: they may acquit him after all. Good. The weather was lovely. The accused would go home. And M. Alphonse Cremier, too, could go to his wife and children. But he must not forget that he had promised to buy his daughter a tennis racquet.

Gabrielle was still standing. It seemed as though the general excitement emanated from her. Through her May had entered the dim court in which shopkeepers had been dimly yawning and a man in a theatrical gown was striking attitudes. May was making itself felt. May was demanding an acquittal. May was demanding pity and love.

Then Gabrielle was led away. And with her removal the tension in the court relaxed. Once more it became engrossed in points of law and petty arguments. Still, M. Amedé Gourmot had not given up hope of a light sentence. If the blind girl had made such an impression, what would it be later? The most important thing was still to come. Glancing provocatively at the prosecutor, he asked the judge to call a new witness, the prisoner's wife, who had just arrived from Moscow. The prosecutor looked very angry but made no protest. He was upset by this new move of the defence. But it was upon the prisoner that M. Amedé Gourmot's words made their greatest impression. Jeanne! Jeanne had arrived. She had come here. They might arrest her. He would see her. He would see her dear face, her black eyes. He was so agitated that he buried his face in his hands. He did not dare look at the door. He could already see Jeanne. He was with her. He was brought back to reality by a dreadful cough.

In front of the president's table stood Aglaia.

Andrew started. It was an involuntary expression of despair. The whole court started too—started to laugh. Lorgnettes, fixed on Andrew, changed their direction. Even M. Alphonse Cremier could hardly refrain from laughing. The barrister was sniggering boastfully, like a ringmaster who has sent a particularly funny clown into the ring. He regarded Aglaia as a creation of his own.

Yes, she was comic, comic enough to make one laugh with hysteria, laugh till the tears came, great human tears. In her dirty patched jacket and that same indescribable hat she looked like a carnival effigy. Aglaia felt shy. The barrister's gown, the uniforms, the solemn environment all frightened her. She bowed to everyone: to the president, the jury, the lawyer. She even bowed to the usher in his braided uniform. She bowed low, from the waist, and the grapes on her hat shook absurdly. She coughed, but even that struck the public as funny. Without waiting for the president to question her she said in Russian to the whole court, "For Christ's sake, forgive him."

M. Alphonse Cremier rang his bell in vain; he could not silence the laughter. The president thought to himself, if the children could see this freak, how they would laugh. An interpreter appeared. Aglaia was questioned. At first she answered calmly, even sensibly. The public calmed down somewhat. M. Amedé Gourmot was quite satisfied with the manner in which Aglaia told of first meeting Andrew, of the mazurka, the wedding, the first years of married life. Opinion was evidently veering in Andrew's favor. The most sentimental of mazurkas could not, of course, explain away the presence of Andrew's letter in the pocketbook. But the virtuous shopkeepers who composed the jury were nevertheless beginning to get sentimental. Little by little the "international criminal" was becoming transformed into a human being who had a wife and a daughter. And it is a

great sorrow when a child dies. Shopkeepers understand that. The wife speaks so tenderly of the accused that she obviously does not believe him to be a murderer. Who knows? And once more the words "judicial error" were murmured. This time by a juryman—to be exact, the teacher of calligraphy.

Perhaps the influence of Gabrielle's unseeing blue eyes was still continuing. Another moment and the jury would acquit Andrew. The doors would open, and golden May would pour into the court.

That frame of mind continued for some time, not less than half an hour. Aglaia spoke slowly, constantly interrupted by fits of coughing, and each phrase was immediately translated, word for word, by the conscientious interpreter. The change came when Aglaia reached the celebrated "interloper" who had alienated her husband's affections. Her voice hardened. She no longer spoke. She barked.

"If only I had caught them at that dancing place 'My-Boy'——"

The interpreter translated that as well. Then the whole court broke into irrepressible laughter. "Laughter kills everything," is one of that country's wise sayings. Laughter killed pity. No one any longer felt sorry for this half-dead consumptive or for the accused. They were all shaken by mad paroxysms of laughter. They could picture that grotesque creature in her hat trimmed with grapes and cock's feathers entering "My-Boy," where elegant financiers danced one-steps. It was ridiculous, and they laughed till they were faint.

Even Aglaia at last became conscious of it. She turned angrily, like a trapped cat. Even the jury were smiling. What were they laughing at? At her sorrow? Her bitter sorrow? They were laughing as though the human heart

were no better than the beads of Acia's curtain. Aglaia was filled with fearful, unbearable anger. Menacing them with her bony hand, she cried, "It is all your fault. You are all heartless."

Andrew could stand no more. He sprang up. He had had all he could do to control himself. His pain and his pity had made it difficult to breathe. He now forgot everything; he forgot that he was in a law court. He forgot Aglaia's cruel words about Jeanne. He forgot everything but the grief and sorrow he was witnessing, and he could not bear it.

"Aglaia," he cried, "dear one, say no more. Don't."

M. Alphonse Cremier rang his bell. Andrew's words were translated. The prosecutor pricked up his ears. The laughter died down. A heavy, watchful silence reigned. But Andrew's plea had not reached Aglaia's consciousness. Hurt and angry, she was filled solely with the desire to tell these gay and soulless creatures to their faces what she thought of them. And again her barking voice broke forth.

"Instead of laughing, you might stop and think how he became what he is. He used to be kind. How he nursed little Sasha! He would not hurt a fly. If he has killed a man now, it is your fault. My sister heard them talking; French, if you please. The wretch is a Frenchwoman. She brought him to this. Yes, such women do not exist in Russia."

And, noticing a barely perceptible smile of self-satisfaction on M. Amedé Gourmot's face, Aglaia, forgetting herself, suddenly howled, "What are you laughing at, you fool? Perhaps it was your bit of fluff that was the cause of it all. I saw her yesterday; and for a thing like that he took a man's life."

Aglaia was led away. M. Amedé Gourmot was not only offended by the translation of her last words, he was utterly crushed by the effect which this witness had had on the public. His trump card had been wasted. One of the jury-

men whispered to the teacher of calligraphy, "There cannot be any mistake. His own wife is convinced of his guilt."

The general public were sniggering and whispering indignantly. Andrew sat huddling on his bench. He saw no one. The extent of his suffering had long passed all human limits. He had a simple, happy disposition. They had forced him to become heroic. Why need everything, even death, have been turned into a vulgar farce, with that stupid beretta, that hat with cock's feathers? Andrew had now only one desire: to return to the silence of Wing No. 4, to die soon.

It was in these circumstances that the public prosecutor began his speech. M. Amedé Gourmot had every right to envy him. What could be easier than his task? The prosecutor spoke briefly. He once more reviewed the evidence. He explained very sensibly the absurd conduct and the silence of the accused. That was not the behavior of an innocent man. That was clear. He said that he understood perfectly the wife's grief and her desire to lay all the blame on some unknown woman in order to save her husband. But he begged the jury not to be credulous. The murder had obviously been committed for gain. Nothing could be less appropriate than to talk of human feelings in this case. The post-war degeneration of Eastern and Central Europe was a matter of common knowledge. Criminals of every description hastened to France. They stopped at nothing, not even murder. Necessity demanded a stern sentence. These sores must be burned out. The lives and security of our citizens must be safeguarded. To be merciful to the criminal was to be merciless to the honest. The prosecutor believed in the jury's powers of discrimination. Let the murderer die; for human life was the most precious of all things.

The prosecutor's speech had not been interrupted by hysterics, nor had he any need of them. But the jury nodded



their heads in approval. That was so. That was true. What he said was very sensible.

It was now the turn of the defence. M. Amedé Gourmot carefully arranged the folds of his gown, drank a glass of water, and began the speech which he had prepared beforehand. His speech was so involved, so pretentious, so trivial, that even the shopkeepers, accustomed though they were to the patriotic rhetoric of the *Petit Parisien*, felt somewhat uneasy. He stuck Latin tags in every phrase, he quoted poetry quite inappropriately. Yawns and laughter alternated among the public. He talked long and diffusely. He began by trying to upset the prosecution with Gabrielle's evidence. He even invented a new proverb: "Through the mouth of the blind, the Lord speaketh." But the jury had had time to forget Gabrielle's eyes, and listening to the young lawyer they shrugged their shoulders. How could one base one's judgment on somebody's feelings?

Next, M. Amedé Gourmot proceeded to give his own version. Let the jury imagine that this was a judicial error due to a series of regrettable coincidences. Let them remember what the blind girl had said about the mysterious disappearance of the dead man's niece. He was astonished at the careless manner in which the preliminary investigation had been conducted. Why had no attempt been made to find Mlle Jeanne Ney? It was quite possible that she had been mixed up in the murder.

No one was looking at Andrew now. The expressionless murderer was of no further interest. So that only the gendarmes noticed that something was wrong with the prisoner. He made as though to spring up; then he bowed his head low once more, as though trying not to hear his counsel's words. A fierce struggle was going on inside Andrew. He loathed his lawyer. He felt that the man was bent on destroying Jeanne. He was ready to shout aloud, "I

killed him, I alone." But he was deterred by the thought that his agitation would look suspicious; they would conclude that Jeanne really had been his accomplice. He must be silent. And Andrew was silent. Only the gendarmes saw what that silence cost him. But the gendarmes were accustomed to the nervous uneasiness of prisoners on that bench, and they paid no heed to it. They yawned, politely covering their mouths with their hands.

M. Amedé Gourmot continued. It would thus be seen that the actual murderer might have got away. There were many photographs in a detective bureau. There were piles of intercepted letters. The prosecutor himself admitted that whoever committed the murder must have been familiar with the place. Let us suppose that it was the niece who had disappeared. She was unhappy there. Tears! Did the jury know aught of the crystal tears of a young girl? Did they know aught of the bitter tears of Judith? She might quite well have planted that pocketbook into which she had put the first photograph that came to her hand. What experienced criminal would dream of carrying his photograph about with him? He was ready to admit that the contents of the letter, the fraudulent documents, and the conduct of the accused did not speak in his favor. He was doubtless accountable to the law. But that did not mean murder. Circumstantial evidence, gentlemen, makes a slippery path. Could the gentlemen of the jury themselves prove where they had been every night since they were born?

That question definitely succeeded in offending the virtuous shopkeepers. All they now wanted to know was when this feather-brain would stop plowing the sands. He had probably been overpaid; he was overdoing it.

And finally, the accused might perhaps be a thief or, as he himself declared, a Communist. There was, of course, no question here of a purely abstract sympathy with Com-

munism such as Jules Lebeau (might his memory never fade) might have evinced. Perhaps he was a Communist in the Russian sense—that is, a petty thief. At this moment the speech was interrupted, not, it is true, by hysterics, but by Andrew's vigorous voice. He had by this time grown somewhat calmer.

"Idiot!"

The president threatened to expel the accused from the court. M. Amedé Gourmot, unruffled by the prisoner's opinion of him, continued. Guilt, therefore, had not been proved. But let us take another possibility: let us suppose that the prisoner had really committed the murder. There were many extenuating circumstances. The jury had heard what that unhappy woman had said. Let them remember the early days of their marriage, the baby's cradle, the cozy happiness of the domestic hearth. Then a sinister figure had appeared on the scene. She had demanded money in exchange for her caresses. She loved jewels, dresses from Paquin, costly perfumes. Love, gentlemen, is a great mystery. Who could withstand the soft whispers of the serpent? Had Adam withstood them? Had Anthony? Had Henry IV? What was the dancing hall, "My-Boy"? Electric lights, drums, expensive liqueurs, the aroma of perfumes. And in that Babylon blossoms a poisonous flower, a *demi-vierge* who has turned the head of the accused man. She bends over him, and with her blood-red lips she murmurs: "I want a costly mantle, I want an emerald brooch." She breathes, she kisses.

Once more M. Amedé Gourmot's flow of eloquence is interrupted by Andrew.

"Stop playing the clown. I do not wish to hear any more of this nonsense. You can kill me, but you have no right to hold me up to ridicule."

The president admonished the prisoner. He could not un-

derstand his excitement. What was there to be offended at? M. Alphonse Cremier did not know that the words "My-Boy" had evoked in Andrew's mind the image of Jeanne—poor, sad, sweet Jeanne, who had tried so hard to dance well, who had smiled so sadly as she murmured, "We must soon part."

M. Amedé Gourmot was now pleading for mercy. But everyone realized that he himself felt no pity for the murderer, that he said what he was saying only because he must somehow give a finish to his unsuccessful speech.

And everyone sighed with relief when, having recited some lines of Racine about the flower of mercy which is thrown into a lions' den, he at last sat down, wiping his damp forehead with a silk handkerchief.

"Prisoner, you have the last word."

Andrew had long prepared himself for this moment. There was much that he wanted to say—not to those who were in court, bored by the proceedings, no—he hoped that his words would appear in print. The comrades would read them. They would learn the identity of this "international criminal." They would learn everything. His words might reach Jeanne. Yes, he had much to say. But he felt so weak that he could hardly rise from his seat. For a moment he was silent; then, softly, simply, as though this were a casual and insignificant conversation, he said, "I did not kill this man. I know that you will not believe me, and I am not saying this for you. I am Andrew Loboff, a member of the Communist party. I fought as best I could. You caught me. You wish to kill me. At first I was agitated. It seemed an insult that I should lose my life as a criminal murderer. But I know now that it does not matter. I did not steal the diamond. You need such stones. I do not. You believe that a Communist and a thief are one and the same thing. I cannot disabuse you. But those to whom I am really speaking know

that that is not so. And there is therefore no need to give them any assurances. You can kill me, you can seize the party funds. That is your right. As for me, all I have to say is this: I knew before that you were dead, contemptible. But it is only to-day that I have learned that you are vile."

M. Alphonse Cremier's good-natured, effeminate face for once became really harsh, or at least it grew purple with anger. He rang his bell irritably: "I must ask you not to insult the court. You are given the right to speak in order to elucidate the question of your guilt, not to make anarchistic demonstrations. Have you anything further to say which is relevant to your case?"

"Only this. I have known happiness. I regret nothing."

After that the jury obviously did not require much time for deliberation. Andrew's last words definitely hardened the offended shopkeepers, and when, in the room to which they retired, the fire insurance inspector said, "Everything is clear, is it not? There are four points, and to all four we say 'yes'?"

There was a general murmur of approval. Murder was not enough for him: besides that, he was an anarchist and a Communist. Thank God that France possesses a machine which cuts short such individuals. Otherwise they would destroy all the shops and murder all those who were honest.

"No one dissents?" asked the inspector, taking a pen from his pocket. The teacher of calligraphy said timidly: "We might perhaps recommend him to mercy. Suppose there is some mistake? Personally, I was much impressed by that blind girl."

But the inspector and the shopkeepers gazed at him with such astonishment, such contempt, that the calligraphy teacher only said, "I am not disagreeing. If he is guilty, he is guilty. I was only speaking of my impressions."

One by one the members of the jury signed the large sheet.



Perhaps if Gabrielle had stood in a corner of the room, her shining, unseeing eyes would have frightened them. Perhaps they would not have signed that sheet. But it is strictly forbidden anyone to enter the room set apart for the jury, and they signed the death sentence as though they were signing a receipt for a postal packet. Only the old teacher at St. Paul's School made a big blot. It was most improper, especially for a teacher of calligraphy. But he could not help it, for he could not forget the blind girl's eyes.

M. Alphonse Cremier solemnly read out the verdict. He was thinking, And now home. Only I must not forget the tennis racquet and some canary seed for the birds. He read, "Condemned to death by beheading."

Andrew was not agitated. He knew all: he would not see Jeanne, there was now nothing before him but silence and death. He glanced round the court for the last time. Strangers, all strangers. No one would say good-bye to him. Jeanne was far away.

Suddenly he caught sight of Aglaia in a corner. She had begged the doorkeeper to admit her and had made her way into the court again. Aglaia had heard the sentence, but she had not yet taken in its significance. Death? What did that mean? Andrew, looking at her mad face, was filled with tenderness. Paying no attention to the president, who was now allocating the costs of the case, Andrew spoke to her across all those rows of spectators.

"Aglaia, forgive me. Forgive me for everything."

Only then did Aglaia understand the full meaning of the president's words. Pushing her way through the amazed audience, she reached M. Alphonse Cremier and flung herself on her knees before him.

"Spare him. It is all my fault. I brought him to this. Execute me, but spare him."

Gendarmes dragged her away. She was screaming hy-

sterically, but it was not the kind of hysteria of which M. Amedé Gourmot had dreamed. The president hurriedly declared the session to be closed. Wishing to encourage the young barrister who was just beginning his career, he gave his hand a friendly pressure: "I congratulate you. In such circumstances . . . but your speech was brilliant."

M. Amedé Gourmot's smile was restrained. It was the sort of smile with which congratulations should be received. Yes, he believed he had been eloquent. It was not his fault if he had not achieved hysterics. That fool had spoiled everything. Well, never mind. He would make his mark on some other occasion. And now he could go to Marie, to her cozy nest.

M. Alphonze Cremier was talking to the public prosecutor: "Well, that's over. A very dull case. If it had not been for that witch in her hat it would have been enough to kill one with boredom."

The public prosecutor was, of course, in a bad temper as usual.

"In my opinion she ought to be summoned for contempt of court. Why are visas ever given to such people? What case is coming before the court to-morrow? All my papers have been muddled up for me again."

"What does it matter to you what case? Where are you going? Home? Then I can give you a lift. Only I must not forget the tennis racquet and the canary seed."

The public were dispersing, they were discontented, it had been a dull case, an uninteresting prisoner, and a banal sentence. Nothing to stir up one's feelings. Law courts become less interesting every year. Criminals really are deteriorating.

Even the shopkeepers, returning to their groceries or their drapers' shops, feeling that they had done their duty, said to each other contemptuously: A straightforward case—

very dull. Was it worth all the inconvenience to which so many of them had been put?

Andrew was led along the corridors of the law courts. He was still looking at the faces around him; without being conscious of it, he was still looking for Jeanne. To see her, only to see her! In a moment he would reach his cell, and that would be the end. There would be no living creature there. He would not see her there.

Golden May rushed in through the open door. After the twilight of the court the dust and light blinded one's eyes. The van was ready. There were ten steps to the van, the last ten steps among the living in a golden May.

Curious onlookers were crowding round. And suddenly, close to the van, Andrew caught sight of a wide-brimmed felt hat. Jeanne wore a hat just like that. He stopped. He was ready to believe that it was she. The gendarmes pushed him, but he resisted. Then the hat was thrust back and he saw the face of a girl unknown to him, with soft brown eyes. Pointing with her finger at Andrew, the girl said, "Doesn't the murderer look dreadful?"

Andrew took the last, the tenth, step.

## XLII

### *It Was Only Love*

MAY is beautiful everywhere. It was beautiful in the broad avenue of Unter den Linden, where the lime trees, old German lime trees, the proud, sweet limes of Heinrich Heine, were breaking into blossom. But no one noticed that it was May. The crowd of pedestrians were pushing and jostling each other like mad creatures. They were like the visitors to the San Remo Casino, too. Halibieff must surely be among them. For gambling was in progress in this avenue, gambling for high stakes.

France had sent a new note to Berlin the day before. Its terms were harsh. They deprived German factories of coal. They deprived German children of milk. Surely the crowds Unter den Linden should have been in tears. But they were rejoicing. They were even congratulating each other. For they were neither workmen nor children. Messrs. Muller and Zilberman had dollars and were fond of eating schnitzel. The dollar was triumphant to-day, and this hustling con-course triumphed with it. They were busy. They hurriedly bought or sold bits of green paper in the manner of old clothes dealers. They were so excited that they trod on one another's corns, and broke their eyeglasses in stumbling over the curbstones. They were in a hurry, because the dollar rose every five minutes by at least the price of a schnitzel. Whether in bowlers or straw hats, whether old or young, pan-Germans or passionate Zionists, they were all nasty, greedy, perspiring creatures.

It was for them that the whole world had been created. The windows of steamship companies were bright with pictures of elegant staterooms, with beds already made up for the night. If M. Zilberman preferred to eat his schnitzel in Fifth Avenue, New York, rather than at the Adlon, the Cunard, the Hamburg-American, or many other lines would consider it an honor to be allowed to toss his stomach on the waves of the Atlantic. It was for them that Jamaica made rum, for them that mulattos rolled tobacco leaves, for them that women painted their lips and expanded the pupils of their eyes with belladonna. It was for them that the sentimental lime trees were preparing to blossom, for them that May was May.

Jeanne could hardly make her way through this crowd. She had arrived from Riga that morning, and the train to Paris did not start till the evening. Jeanne was full of joy. To-morrow she would perhaps see Andrew.

She stopped at a street corner. It was still early. Where should she go? She glanced at the newspapers on sale in a kiosk—one of them had a picture of some procession in Paris. Jeanne recognized the church of St. Etienne. She smiled. She could feel Andrew's breath on her shoulder. She no longer looked at the newspapers. Closing her eyes, she gave herself up to her emotion, and though it was but a ray of sunshine that touched her shoulder, she felt that they were already together. Then, opening her eyes, she saw Andrew in front of her. She was frightened. Was she going mad? She hurried away from the kiosk, but straight-way returned. She could not refrain from looking again. No, it was not hallucination. It was Andrew's face, his smile. Disregarding the saleswoman's protest, Jeanne clutched the Paris paper. She was not mad. It was Andrew. He—he—— Below the picture stood the words, "The Murderer Who Is Condemned to Death."



Do you remember how the little French girl who had read the Golden Library wept when she was not sure whether Andrew could be her real husband? When had that been? A long, a very long time ago. What had happened to Jeanne? What is it that love does to the human heart? With what fire does love temper it? With what bonds does love fetter it? It passes all understanding.

Jeanne read all that there was in the paper, and she did not collapse in a faint, she did not cry out, or sob. Plunging into the crowd, she made all the haste she could. She had neither head nor heart, neither dread nor pain, she had only feet. She had become an invisible telegram, speeding along the wires.

She ran, with her mind a blank, startling or amusing the pedestrians. She ran until she reached the railway station. Only there, in front of the terrible board which was, after all, only a time-table, did she realize how powerless she was. There was no train till 8.20 in the evening. Running was not enough. She must think. Yet she had to run, she could not stand still. Where should she go? Her first thought was: to the police station.

The police station was still and drowsy. A stout, bald official was indolently sucking a cigar. For the life of him he could not make out what it was all about. What murder? What trial? What had Paris to do with it? It had happened in Paris? Then what had he to do with it? The official was first and foremost a patriot. He even lost his temper. Those French are up to all sorts of filth. But they might at least leave Berlin alone. Jeanne, however, would not go away. Feeling that her words were having no effect on this man, she even shook him by the shoulder. He must wake up. He must help her. They might kill an innocent man. And Jeanne was filled with such inconceivable strength that the German surrendered. He was touched. He began to fuss, to look

up rules. He threw away his cigar. But he, too, was powerless. He was only a police station underling who took down the particulars of thefts. Perhaps she ought to go to police headquarters? No, she had better go to the Consulate, the French Consulate. And the lazy man ran down the stairs to show her the way.

The Consulate was closed. It was late. To-morrow. Jeanne thrust the hall porter aside and ran upstairs. She flung herself at a secretary who was already putting on his overcoat and hurrying home to dinner. He was at first unwilling even to speak to her. It was not his business. She had better go to Paris. If she had fresh evidence she had better send a telegram to the President of the Republic. As for himself, he had no time. He was in a hurry. But Jeanne still stood there, and he realized that she would not go away. It was Fate. The secretary would be late for dinner. But what could he do? He sat down in despair. Yes, he had read the case. It had been in all the papers. The accused had been unable to prove an alibi. He had refused to say where he had spent the night before his arrest. That was all. He had been with Jeanne? Telegrams, then, to the Public Prosecutor, to the Minister of Justice, to everybody. But wait a moment. Had Jeanne any proofs? In a hotel? Splendid. They had signed the register? What? No? A very queer hotel! The secretary looked at Jeanne suspiciously. He remembered that her name had been mentioned in the newspapers. Somebody or other had suspected her. Jeanne had better go to Paris herself. In such circumstances telegrams would be futile. Who would believe a man's mistress? Would the landlady be likely to remember them? Again, no? Then what proof had she? Without new and weighty evidence it would be impossible to get the case reopened. The law was not to be trifled with. The prisoner had refused to petition for mercy.

The only possible way to obtain a reprieve would be to bring forward fresh facts. So long as there were none, nothing could be done. Of course, he was very sorry for her, very sorry indeed, but he could not help her. The only thing left for her to do was to weep.

The secretary himself was not going to weep. He was going to dine. He had already missed his usual dinner hour, and the stomach resents that sort of thing. He went toward the door, but Jeanne said menacingly, "No, you won't go away. You have got to help me." And the secretary, seeing that he would in fact not get away, said in despair, "Think. Is there no independent witness who can confirm your statement? Perhaps someone knows that you spent the night with the condemned man?"

Jeanne gave a cry of joy. Saved! It was almost with tenderness that she now remembered the terrible man on the stairs of the hotel. She had thought then that he had come to ruin them. Now she saw that he had been sent by Fate as a merciful guardian.

But how was she to find him? Jeanne did not know his address, and suppose he had left Paris?

Hope gave way to despair. Is it really easy to find a man? Jeanne would have given anything at that moment to see the hateful Halibieff.

"You know who he is? Is he French?"

"No. Russian, a refugee. His name is Halibieff."

It was the secretary's turn to rejoice. Thank God, he would be able to go to his dinner. Jeanne was lucky. She need not even go to Paris. The man was here. He had come the day before to obtain a visa. He was a very respectable business man. The secretary would find his address in a moment. Jeanne had better go to see him. They could go to Paris together, or they could send a telegram witnessed at the

Consulate. To-morrow was a holiday. They could not carry out an execution—Jeanne had plenty of time.

The secretary found the address. Halibieff was living in the Kurfürstendamm. He lodged with a Madame Lopke at No. 86.

No enamored woman ever hurried to a rendezvous as Jeanne hastened to Halibieff. The thought that he might not be at home seemed awful. She wanted only one thing: to see him as soon as possible. She felt neither fear nor aversion.

He had seen them. He would go with her. He would save Andrew. Oh, if only he were in!

She rang the bell, but when Madame Lopke opened the door she was too excited to answer her questions. At last she managed to speak Halibieff's name, but with such anxiety that the landlady guessed at once: the Russian had got another little puss.

It was as Jeanne had feared: he was not at home. Where was he? That, Madame Lopke could not say. She never interfered in her lodgers' affairs. But he would probably be in soon. If Jeanne wanted to see him so urgently she had better wait in the entrance hall. There, she could sit on that chair. And, jingling her keys, Madame Lopke retired.

Where was Halibieff? Why, of course, Unter den Linden, where he belonged, in and out of dark courtyards, of dirty little brokers' offices with rooms full of tobacco smoke and expectoration. He too had read the French note that morning. He too was buying and selling green paper. It was not as amusing as throwing thousands on the roulette table at the Casino. But what else could he do? In his long struggle with the little white ball, the little white ball had won. It could spin round forever, but Halibieff's money was on the wane. Moreover, M. Luret, the manufacturer of cigarette paper whose daughter Halibieff had at one time intended to marry, had turned up at San Remo, and when Halibieff had

met him on the Promenade M. Luret had not only cut him dead but had remarked to his companion, "A very suspicious character."

On hearing those words, Halibieff at once made up his mind to seek other climes. He went to Berlin, hoping to worm himself in among its various kinds of speculators. Berlin seemed to him like the hotel to which the unexact Chichi had accompanied him. But his Dutch guildens were nearly at an end. Halibieff felt too worn out for fresh enterprises. He could only gamble. It would be alike entertaining and profitable to speculate on the dollar. Although the street corners and shady brokers' offices did not resemble gambling houses, there was the same pleasurable element of chance in both. Halibieff played. He played on the French Premier's speech or on hunger riots. He won. He went to night dens. He learned the secret beauties of not only the best musical comedy artists, but also of dramatic actresses. Then he got sick of it. He went to lodge with the respectable Madame Lopke, and hired decent middle-class women for the night—the wives of school teachers or even of professors.

But his obsession still continued, and it was not cured by the caresses of these blue-eyed Elsas and Enas and Emmas. He was no happier in Berlin than he had been at San Remo. He could never be happy until that fellow's head had been cut off. Only that could bring him a little peace. That would put a full stop to the affair. Little by little the murder of the Rue Thiboumery would be forgotten, and when it was forgotten Halibieff would regain his courage. And then he would begin a search for the brunette.

Meanwhile, he was buying dollars Unter den Linden. He little knew that in the dark entrance of his boarding house for single men Jeanne was sitting and waiting for him.

She found it hard to wait, hard to sit still on the chair which Madame Lopke had so magnanimously offered her.



The only possible thing at such moments is to run, to hurry, to talk—to do something. Jeanne listened for footsteps. She tried to remember Halibieff's walk. He was coming? No, again it was not he. The secretary had said there was plenty of time. If they started at eight-twenty they would be in Paris by to-morrow evening. It was already after six. Where was he? Was it possible they were going to miss the train? Jeanne got up, then sat down again. She sat still, but she was writhing inwardly. She screamed silently. And she waited. Never had she waited like that, not even for Andrew. Every time she heard a footfall she held her breath. She waited for more than an hour.

At last a key was turned. Jeanne sprang up. Someone entered. The electric light was switched on. Jeanne and Halibieff found themselves face to face. Both were petrified. Neither of them could move a step or utter a word.

Jeanne wanted to run to Halibieff, to tell him everything, to beg him to go to the station at once. But she did not move. Her strength had left her. She seemed unable even to realize that this was Halibieff, the man for whom she had waited with such longing. She could see nothing but his hands, and his hands hypnotized her as a python hypnotizes a rabbit. Those hands were moving, clutching the air, now hiding behind his back, and again reaching out toward Jeanne.

Halibieff's hands were going mad. He did not move, but they raged. That showed the extent to which Halibieff was excited; in moments of agitation he lost all control over his hands. He knew that and was afraid of them, but he could not help it—they gave him away every time. At that moment he was filled with a fear that was insupportable. His eyes searched for hidden police. Nechensohn had betrayed him. The end had now come. She had found out about the letter. They would cut off his head.

Unable to bear it any longer, Halibieff fled, fled stupidly,

not even to the staircase and into the street, where there would at least have been a chance of getting away, but into the interior of the flat, down its dark, narrow passage. He did not know what he was doing. He simply ran, ran in terror. On seeing him disappear, Jeanne immediately recovered her senses. She remembered why she was there. No, Jeanne would not let him go. She ran after him. Halibieff rushed into the bathroom but had not time to lock the door. On seeing Jeanne before him again, he began to breathe heavily. He was ready to seize her and strangle her. He could not escape death anyhow.

But something happened which made him pause. The brunette who had come to arrest him was saying something in a gentle, a very gentle voice. He did not understand her words, yet he felt that she was not threatening but beseeching him. He forced himself to overcome his fear, to understand what she was saying. Jeanne repeated:

"I implore you. We must go at once. The train starts at eight-twenty. You saw him on the stairs. You know that he is innocent. Save him."

Halibieff realized that the danger had passed. He was saved. The brunette was pleading. She had no suspicions about the letter. But what would happen next? No matter what. His gambling instinct awakened. He drew himself up and cried: "What do you want of me? I was not in any hotel. How dare you rush into strangers' flats? I—I—I shall call the police."

As he said those words, Halibieff was overcome by a feeling of faintness. He had gone too far. What if this were a trick? What if she knew why he, Halibieff, had gone to that infernal hotel? What if she were playing with him, and she, not he, were to call the police?

But the brunette did not call the police. Halibieff was experiencing the greatest triumph of his not uneventful life.

He could not believe his eyes. The brunette was kneeling to him. Jeanne had foreseen everything but that which she was now witnessing. Halibieff might have gone away, he might be ill or dead. But in that little room, with its white china and its gently gurgling taps, she saw evil before her—not a man, not even the dreadful hands, but evil itself. And she realized how powerless she was. Only the great intensity of her love enabled her to vanquish her despair. She fell to her knees. She implored. She was ready to humble herself in any way. She was ready to die here and now, on the wet tiles, but she must persuade him to go to Paris. She kept on saying so, painfully repeating it with the tenacity of a drowning man. Halibieff stood over her, tall, erect, proud. He was triumphant. But his triumph could not last forever. A medley of passions took possession of his heart. They tore his poor heart to tatters. He must decide on some line of action. Madame Lopke might come in at any moment. What would she think? Halibieff had to be very careful of his reputation. Should he turn the brunette out? Should he run away? Or change his passport? Or stick to what he had just said, that he knew nothing and that he had not been to that hotel? How could she prove that he had stolen her letter? Rubbish. Yes, but what if she could? And Halibieff's triumph was marred by fear. Fear whispered: Be careful, turn the girl out, count up your green notes and fly. But passion opposed the arguments of fear. It was not for nothing that Halibieff was at heart a romantic.

He seemed to realize suddenly with his whole being that the girl at his feet was not just anybody, but that very brunette for whom he had longed night after night. He glanced at Jeanne out of the corner of his eye. Her troubled face seemed particularly attractive; he had for many years preferred women in their tragic moments. Now she had

come to him and was in his power. How could he let her go? If he did, of what use would his life be to him? No, he must seize her, carry her to his room, fling her down on the sofa! Kiss her! But it was dangerous. She might inform against him.

For several minutes battle raged between his fear and his passion, though outwardly he retained his pose of triumphant pride. Jeanne went on all the time, repeating her hopeless prayer. He suddenly made up his mind. The gambler would stake all on one number. Trying to make his voice sound calm, he whispered: "Nothing is done for nothing in this world, my beauty. I will go to Paris with you. I will save your lover. But in exchange, you will have to love me a little. You must stay with me till to-morrow morning. You understand me, my exquisite one?"

Jeanne Ney loved Andrew. And that said, all is said. Jeanne loved him at all times. She loved him when she saw her father's dead body in the study. She loved him when she heard about Aglaia. She loved him in the room in the Rue Odessa. She loved him at all times; in sorrow and in joy, loved all and everything in him; loved him as deeply as any human being can love another. It was not an effort to obtain happiness, nor play-acting, nor heroism. It was only love: the simplest, the least rational, and the greatest thing we have in life. Tell me of what use it is to write so much poetry, to turn on the footlights, to make up the faces of actors, of what use it is to go to musty churches, to repeat such words as *good*, *self-sacrifice*, *truth*—when in the bathroom of Madame Lopke's boarding house a small, weak woman, kneeling on the tiled floor and looking straight at Halibieff, at the bluish white of his eyes, at his avid hands, answered calmly, "Very well. But we leave by the first train to-morrow?"

Jeanne had one sole thought: it would mean a delay of

twelve hours. The train went at nine in the morning. But what could she do? She realized that otherwise Halibieff would not consent. So she must send a telegram in the morning before they started. Of herself she did not think at all. Jeanne had lost all consciousness of self from the moment that she had read that one line in the newspaper. A telegram does not take more than two hours. She submitted to Halibieff mechanically. She rose, went into his room, and sat down on the sofa. She was devoid of feeling.

But Halibieff was possessed by the most ardent, by the wildest, feeling. He wanted to throw himself upon her, to kiss her with biting kisses that hurt, to crush her, to smother her so that she might learn what Halibieff's obsession was like. But he restrained himself. This cowardly, hysterical gambler had at times a marvelous power of self-restraint. One need only recall his supper at the Avenue Restaurant.

He restrained himself. He could fling away Canadian dollars, but he took care of his Dutch guildens. Margot or Emma, or even Mlle Viole, were cheap stuff. They were not worth taking care of. But how many bitter moments had this brunette cost him! He must recoup himself in full for them. He must so arrange matters that this would not be like a mere ordinary night with a girl. He must create an opera, a paradise, a dream.

Halibieff's passion grew with every moment. He was so excited that he paced his room, smoking one cigarette after another, his hands gesticulating wildly. He seemed to ignore Jeanne. Jeanne sat quite still. She waited for the touch of his hands as a patient awaits the surgeon's knife, no, as Andrew awaited that unintelligible and senseless something that had made his neck hurt in the railway carriage.

At last Halibieff stopped. He approached Jeanne. But he did not seize her, or crush her in his arms, or cover her



with the saliva which filled his big mouth. He said with a certain amount of gentleness:

"Do you know what, Jeannette? You must allow me to call you that. Jeanne is so—so ordinary, like Ivan in Russia. Jeannette is quite different. There is a perfume in that name. A first-class perfume. Well, do you know what we will do, Jeannette? We'll have tea as though we were at home. With home-made cakes. And then we will go quietly to bed, just as though we had come from our wedding."

This seemed to Jeanne so monstrous that, willing though she was to agree to anything, she shuddered. If Halibieff had sworn at her, beaten her, ravished her, it would have been comprehensible and therefore easier to bear. But this mockery she had not expected.

Delighted with his idea, Halibieff went in search of Madame Lopke. They soon returned together. Madame Lopke laid the table, brought the teapot, a bottle of rum, some gingerbreads, and even a little vase of pansies. She was a very respectable middle-aged woman, who, thanks to a peculiarity of her corsets, appeared to have two busts, one in front and one behind, both equally sumptuous. They shook menacingly when Madame Lopke was agitated. She took only men lodgers in her boarding house, and mainly foreigners, who wished to be quite free but to have the comforts of home. They were allowed to bring women in for the night so long as they were well behaved. A kiss is a private matter, nobody's business. All these little ladies who spent nights here, to-day with the Brazilian attaché, to-morrow with the Japanese student, knew the respectable landlady and her weakness. Wishing to keep on good terms with her, they brought Madame Lopke thin silk stockings. For, notwithstanding all her respectability, Madame Lopke adored expensive stockings. Her legs, which

were like the huge stone posts in the Alley of Victory, showed through the silken cobweb. But she was a complaisant landlady. She glanced with benevolence at her Russian lodger's new "puss." She opened the bed, brought two pillows, and shook up the eiderdown. She looked with a critical eye at the snowy marital couch and said to Jeanne: "There, you'll sleep in a soft bed, my dear."

Halibieff poured the tea through a strainer and began to talk in a soulful tone.

"Understand me, Jeannette, I am a most unhappy man. Some have a happy childhood. But I? I was treated like a dog. Niketka this and Niketka that and a box on the ears. No sympathy. And it has always been like that, all my life. I went into business. But the fact is, God created me for other things. My soul is on fire, like a burnt offering. You think, 'Halibieff wants to paw me.' No, he wants kindness. He wants tenderness. I won't conceal from you that I want to kiss you. I do want to, very much. But that is not the main thing. Do you suppose that I have any difficulty in getting any madam I want? It's only a question of the rate of exchange, so to speak. When the dollar rises you can't get rid of the women. How many theatrical stars do you suppose have been on that bed? There are people who are so moved when they go to a theater that they blubber, but I know what it is all made of. I may have unfastened her hooks and eyes. But is that the main thing? I have made an altar in my heart. I look on you as a Raphael picture. I am waiting for ecstasy. Here we are, sitting together like a bride and bridegroom. We are having tea. There are flowers on the table. Perhaps you will recite poetry to me: 'At midnight an angel in flight through the skies'? O God! My little brunette, you are mine. My dreams have come true."

Jeanne was silent. That made Halibieff begin to get angry. It upset all his plans. He had wanted to create an atmos-

phere, and she sat there like a statue. Not a word, not a smile. Where was the illusion for which he was looking? He had recourse to the bottle. In his teacup the quantity of tea steadily diminished and the quantity of rum steadily increased.

They sat for a long time in silence. And when at last Halibieff again spoke he was no longer a husband or an affianced lover, but the drunken Halibieff, the terrible Halibieff who had frightened Margot of the Gaverni Bar.

"This is a swindle. What do you suppose that I want with your tricks? I can get as many as I like for a dollar. I made a bargain with you, didn't I? You promised to love me. Then love me. Do you hear what I say? Love me."

Losing all control, Halibieff flung himself on Jeanne. He experienced no pleasure. He insulted her. It was as though he were casting out all that was dark and terrible in him. He was wreaking vengeance on her, vengeance for all his humiliations, for his fear, for that night, for his flight along the Boulevard Edgar Quinet, for Chichi. He jeered at her. He interrupted his snorts and grunts with explanations.

"It's not your Andrew. It is I, Halibieff."

All was quiet in Madame Lopke's respectable boarding house. How could anyone believe that in one of its rooms, where a rosy lamp burned and flowers stood on the table, a human creature was being tortured with the most cruel of tortures? Jeanne was silent. She must be brave. It was all for Andrew. No, she was betraying Andrew. She would endure any suffering, but to do so she must think incessantly of Andrew. Now she could not think of him. To think of Andrew was an insult. She must forget Andrew. That was the worst torture of all.

Halibieff did not desist. With his hands, those hands from the poster, he gripped her, crushed her, tore at her.

Who can say how many hours there are in a night? Who can say how much strength there is in a human being?

There came a pause. Halibieff lay on his back, breathing in heavy, spasmodic gasps. Pressing his lips to Jeanne's ear, he whispered "Say 'Niko, I love only you in all the world.' Say it, or I won't go to Paris."

The room became very still, as still as the Fourth Wing of the Santé Prison. Clearly, exactly, Jeanne repeated each word separately. Terrible sounds were the response. Halibieff was weeping, weeping drunken tears.

"I know you are lying. No one, no one in the world loves me. I am a miserable man. I ought to die."

His tears soon gave way to a fresh outburst of lust. Many hours passed before he fell asleep, tired out, but still moving his wet fingers.

Five. Half-past five. The train started at eleven minutes past nine. Morning, drab morning, through windows which looked on a blank wall. Bolts were being drawn somewhere. Carpets were being beaten down below. It would soon be the end. Are there any words which are uttered by men with such despair or such hope as those words, "the end"? As the night in the Rue Odessa had come to an end, so also did the night in Madame Lopke's respectable boarding house.

Seven. Jeanne began to rouse Halibieff. He was evidently a heavy sleeper. He did not at first understand what was happening. He again imagined that Jeanne had come to arrest him. Then it all came back to him. That, however, did not calm him. He pulled on his trousers with trembling hands.

"I'll be back in a minute. Then we'll go straight to the station."

Halibieff was sick with fatigue and apprehension. His feelings for Jeanne were now those of the gambler in the pale light of early dawn, when the tea is cold, and only

disgust is inspired by the sight of cards and the green table littered with cigarette ash, and when he is unwillingly compelled to settle for his losses. He no longer remembered his obsession. His one desire was to get rid of her.

He went in search of Madame Lopke, who always rose early, and who had already encased her two busts in her corsets.

"Madame Lopke, I am going to Hamburg for a few days on business."

Madame Lopke inquired whether he would like to take some sandwiches with him and wished him a happy journey.

Jeanne waited. Five minutes passed, ten minutes, an hour. Halibieff did not return. It was eight o'clock. They would be late. Jeanne felt all the slowness of time, the infinity of a minute. An empty bottle. Pansies. A rumpled bed. But no Halibieff.

Half-past eight. Jeanne left the room. She searched the corridor for Halibieff. She went into that same bathroom where yesterday her fate had been decided. Halibieff was nowhere to be seen. All she found was Madame Lopke, who was grinding coffee.

"What are you doing here, little one? Taking an interest in other people's rooms? That is very wrong."

Both busts shook with indignation.

"I am looking for M. Halibieff."

"Oh, what nonsense you do talk. Really—it is morning now. A busy man has other things to do than make love to you. M. Halibieff has gone away."

"That is impossible. We are going away together."

"I tell you he has gone. He has gone to Hamburg. He took three sandwiches for the journey."

"That cannot be true. He promised me."

"It's no use making a scene, my dear. This is not a market place, it is a family boarding house. If M. Halibieff prom-



ised you anything he will keep his word. He always pays his rent regularly. He is not the sort of man to take anybody in. But I can't have any scandals. If you begin to make a fuss I shall call the janitor."

Jeanne ran out. Opposite the house, above the jeweler's shop, there was a large clock. It told her the rest. It was a quarter-past nine. There was no Halibieff. The morning train had gone.

Along the wide street bathed in sunshine, along the street of tailors and florists, along the elegant Kurfürstendamm, a small bent woman made her way. Her eyes were dull and expressionless. Her face which had suddenly become thin, was, if not old then of no age, tortured, dead, estranged. She walked slowly. There was no need to hurry, there would be no train for eleven hours. She looked at no one: she had no use for flowers or men or sun. She walked slowly and simply, just like other pedestrians.

Look at her, you philosophers and you happy ones, who apply the epithet of skeptic or cynic to anyone who dares to describe life as it really is; you, who find a wise justification for everything, you who would be ready even to wreath Halibieff's hands with flowers from those windows, look at her and tell me—who will answer for that night? No, you had better say nothing. Better be silent. Neither she nor anyone who loves her has any use for words.

### XLIII

#### *Eugène Pettefaure Does a Kind Action*

PIERRE POUATRAS was not far from Andrew. He was in cell No. 47 of the Second Wing. That was the most comfortable wing in the Santé Prison. The Governor wished for no superfluous publicity, he preferred that the newspapers should mention him as rarely as possible. The prisoners confined in the Second Wing were a very strange lot. They often appeared to be just ordinary thieves but turned out to be newspaper editors or even deputies. The ultimate fate of those in the Fourth Wing was quite clear to the Governor: they would be beheaded, and a headless man cannot cause any unpleasantness. It was quite another story with the prisoners in this wing. Many of them made good careers: they became prefects or ministers and must be treated with consideration. No, the Second Wing was not the Fourth.

Eugène Pettefaure, a warder who had recently been transferred from the Fourth to the Second Wing, could not grasp this difference. He had been in the Fourth Wing for seven years. He had made a fine art of maintaining silence by covering a prisoner's mouth and noiselessly leading him to the isolation cell. He had, nevertheless, been transferred because, after the recent inquiry into abuses in the Second Wing, no experienced old warders remained there. But it was no good, Eugène Pettefaure could not realize that there was any difference between one prisoner and another. The Governor knew that this one would have his head cut off, and that one might, in a year or so, become the head of all

the houses of correction in the Department of the Seine. But neither of them was anything but a mere number to Eugène Pettefaure.

Of course the political prisoners, who had been accustomed to various privileges, were not particularly pleased with the new warder. They did all they could to annoy him, just as schoolboys try to annoy a master who is spiteful or stupid. This generally had very little effect on the steady nerves of the squint-eyed Eugène Pettefaure. Mere numbers could not offend him. But to-day he was upset. The fact of the matter was that outside the prison walls Eugène Pettefaure had a private life of his own. He had, for instance, a flat in the Rue Glacière, a charming flat with gas and running water. He had a wardrobe with a cheval glass. He had a wife, a real wife, Madame Thérèse Pettefaure. And, finally, he had a son, the nine-year-old Paupaul, the best scholar in the Arago Arrondissement and a future warder of the Fourth Wing. And on that day he had become seriously ill. The doctor who examined him had made suspicious noises in his throat and shaken his head. And Madame Thérèse Pettefaure, that fat fool who had no idea about prison rules, who was as superstitious as a cow—if cows really are superstitious—that fool woman had begun to moan: "God is punishing us. Loulou died, and now Paupaul will die. It's all because of you, Eugène. You cut off heads there. Think how many people curse you. As for thanks, has anyone ever thanked you? Have you ever done a kind action in your life?"

Eugène tried in vain to explain that he did not cut off heads but merely saw to it that those whose heads were to be cut off behaved themselves properly. He assured her in vain that the calling of prison warder was highly moral and therefore equivalent to good actions. The silly woman would not be quiet. That was why Eugène Pettefaure was so

upset. The prisoners did their best to annoy him, and the warder's head was full of the most outlandish ideas: at one moment he wanted to behead the lot, and the next he wanted to let them all out like schoolboys let out of school.

It was already evening, and in another hour Eugène would be relieved. He tried to doze on his feet, he was feeling very unwell. The voice of No. 47 roused him. That was the most obnoxious number of the lot. No. 47 was always laughing and singing. Laughing in prison! Singing in prison! Could shamelessness go further? Oh, if only No. 47 were transferred to the Fourth Wing Eugène would soon teach him to be silent. But here he could do nothing. He looked angrily through the peephole at this unutterable number with the impudent smile. But No. 47 was not smiling for once, he was calling the warder.

"Here, Uncle Eugène, what is all that noise under the window?"

A question of that sort was the height of impudence. At any ordinary time, Eugène would have treated it with silent contempt, but he was feeling nervous. He therefore answered with unfeigned pleasure, "They are fixing up the 'widow.'" (That is the name which a country inclined to poetic melancholy has given to the guillotine.) "They are going to cut off the head of a number in the Fourth Wing to-morrow."

"The blackguards!"

"Don't you call names. He killed a man and stole eighty thousand francs. It's a good thing to behead a number of that sort, a foreigner called either Cislav or Leboeuf, a Russian, I believe."

Eugène Pettefaure had every reason to regret his unwonted loquacity. On hearing his last words No. 47 positively went mad. True, he did not sing or laugh. Nor did he call names. But he roared. He thumped on the door. He

shouted, "The Prosecutor, the Public Prosecutor at once!"

It was obvious madness. How could a prisoner demand that the public prosecutor should be disturbed at nine o'clock in the evening? But No. 47 would not be quieted. His shouts grew louder and louder. Eugène was pleased at that. If a prisoner was unruly Eugène had the right, even in this sentimental Second Wing, to march him off to a punishment cell. It would be very pleasant to lock up No. 47 in a dark, smelly punishment cell. In his most amiable manner Eugène asked the mad number to go on: "You go on shouting or break something. Then I will take you to a punishment cell."

Pouatras subsided. He began to reflect. It would be foolish to get himself locked up in a punishment cell. If he were locked up till morning everything might be lost. Andrew had got involved in some dark business. The eighty thousand—that was Lebeau's money. But what was he to do? If only he had a couple of days to turn round in. The day after to-morrow Pouatras's sentence would end; he would be free. He could have gone to the public prosecutor himself. He could have set all the party comrades going. But, as it was, what should he do? Did at least his friend's girl know all about it? Pouatras turned to Eugène.

"Listen, Uncle Eugène, you are, I believe, a bad man. Still you are a man, damn you. They are going to execute an innocent man. You must do a kind action. You must help me. In a quarter of an hour you will be going off duty. Go at once to two places: to the Prosecutor of the Republic and to this man's friends. Where to find the Prosecutor, you know better than I do. His friends live in the Rue Thiboumery, No. 17. It's near the municipal slaughter house. In the courtyard, third floor on the left. She's called Jeanne. Or there is her cousin, a blind girl. I don't know their surname,



but you will be able to find them. Everyone in the house is sure to know the blind girl. Tell them, and tell the Prosecutor that the man is innocent. Tell them that I know how he came by that eighty thousand."

Eugène was looking through the spy hole. He was flabbergasted.

"Why should I do it? It's not in the rules. Indeed, it's against the rules."

"I've told you already. You must do a kind action."

What a strange coincidence! Why had Paupaul fallen ill? Why was No. 47 repeating the stupid words of Madame Thérèse Pettefaure? Was there a conspiracy against Eugène? The warder replied gloomily, "It's not one you're asking for—it's two."

But Pouatras guessed from his tone that he was willing to do anything. Pouatras calmed down somewhat; he was an easygoing man and he firmly believed that everything was for the best in this world. But Pouatras was mistaken. When he was relieved Eugène did not know himself whether or not he would do as he had been asked. He even turned to the left in the Boulevard Arago with the intention of having a game at dominoes with a friend. But superstitious fear deterred him. Who knows but what that fool woman was right? What if Paupaul should die because he had refused to do a kind action? Paupaul would no longer boast of being at the top of his class. Paupaul would never be a warder in Wing No. 4. It would be better to be on the safe side by doing this infernal kind action—but only one; not two. One was quite enough.

He was afraid to go to the prosecutor. It was a risky thing to do. Everybody would hear about it, and it might cost him his place. But if he took off his uniform and went in plain clothes to those women, it would be all right. It was

not written on his face that he was a prison warder. It would be perfectly safe, and he would have done a kind action.

So, after changing his clothes, Eugène Pettefaure went to the Rue Thiboumery. It took him a long time, and his ticket on the Metropolitan cost him fourteen sous. But he felt proud. He was not only the best warder in the Santé Prison, he was a man really capable of kind actions.

The office was dark and empty. Since M. Raymond Ney's death the rats had multiplied, and they felt themselves freer than ever. Gabrielle, lonely and forgotten, wandered about among them. In the day time the office was as busy as it used to be. In the day time, Gaston would come and whisper, "Silence," and squeeze her arm till it hurt. Gabrielle knew that Gaston had taken Halibieff's place, and she was silent.

Gaston had been particularly insistent of late. A week earlier, on the very day before the trial, the long expected had happened. Madame Poux had not played the doctor false; she had at last died. In a month's time, Gabrielle would become the legal wife of Rotten-nose. He had informed her of that with a coarse laugh. He was happy, life is not unhappy for everyone. In a month's time Gaston would receive the contents of the safe. Yes, life was pleasant.

Gabrielle was wandering alone among the rats in the dark labyrinth. She was recalling that night, the sticky puddle, her father's wet lips. She was walking up and down, silently weeping. The rats around her squealed impudently.

When Eugène entered the bureau he lighted a match and frowned. There was no lamp. What did a blind girl want with a lamp? Only a waste of paraffin. He looked at the dark corners and at the girl in an old torn dress. It was no better here than in the cells of the Santé Prison. However, that was no business of his. Each of us lives according to his

means. He said curtly, "Are you blind? Yes? Have you a cousin Jeanne? Good. No. 47 asks me to tell you that the murderer is innocent. He must not be executed. No. 47 knows how he got the eighty thousand. Go at once to the State Prosecutor and inform him of this."

It was by no means easy for Eugène Pettefaure to make a speech like that. For he did not believe a word of it. How could a murderer be innocent? Rubbish. They all deserved to have their heads cut off. Still, he said it. Then, after a moment's silence, he added, "I am not doing this for money. I am doing a kind action."

## XLIV

### *What Man Lives By*

IT is a book that has been translated into all the languages of the world, even into Tchouvash and into the poverty-stricken language of the Geru race which lives in the wilds of Central Africa. It is an old, a very old, book. No other book has gone through so many editions. Everyone reads it, good and bad, bearded savants and schoolchildren. Has it not served as the foundation alike of great empires and of the grocer's marital comfort? It has fired alike the torch of inspiration in the human breast and the cruel flames of Toledo. It is a big book, a heavy book. Like all other books, it was written by quite ordinary men, probably by old Jews who were either very sly or very simple, or who were, quite possibly, sly simpletons. This book was written as all books are written but, singling it out from all other books, men call it "holy." Only children and the blind Gabrielle believe Perrault's fairy tales, but everybody must believe this Holy Book. Well, since it is possible to make a man weep with the penetrating sounds produced by the manipulation of taut sheepgut, since it is possible to make a man die for a tattered rag by giving it the proud name of banner, since man really is so adaptable a creature, why should it not be possible to believe in this big old book? Perhaps you do believe in it? Oh, do not believe in it. Burn it, the old leather-clad liar. Just listen to this:

It was a quarter-past ten before Gabrielle reached the State Prosecutor, M. Henri Belier. She had to have a guide,

and in the Rue Thiboumery everyone was busy with his own affairs, no one was willing to waste an evening. Gabrielle went out alone. She did not know how to find her way in the streets, and when crossing some unknown square she was nearly knocked down by a taxi. The driver began to swear at her, but Gabrielle told him that she was blind and had to save a man's life and asked him to help her. She believed that all drivers were as kind as the one who had taken her and Jeanne for a joy ride. Her words touched the man, and he agreed to take her to the house which she was seeking.

Perhaps you are surprised? So the old book does not lie? Wait. Chauffeurs may be kind-hearted, but they manage nothing except their cars. The chauffeurs themselves, and all other folk, are managed by people quite other than taxi drivers.

Although it was early, the State Prosecutor, M. Henri Belier, was on the point of going to bed. He had to be up at a particularly early hour next morning. He had to get up at five, as though he were a wretched factory hand. It is pleasant to go to bed at five after a night at the Gaverni Bar, but M. Henri Belier had to rise at that unearthly hour. At six a criminal was to be guillotined, and as the representative of the law M. Henri Belier had to be present. The presence of M. Henri Belier turned the simple act of separating a man's head from his body into a triumph of human reason and conscience. Therefore he had to get up at five, just when it is so pleasant to sleep. Well, it was M. Henri Belier's duty. He occupied a high position. He was one of the most respected men in the Republic. He lived comfortably. He had a Rolls-Royce and a villa at Deauville. But he had duties, just as a factory hand has. And one of his duties was to be present when heads were cut off. Does not the book tell us that man shall earn his bread by the sweat of his brow? Perhaps the old book does not lie.



And so, in view of that early rising, M. Henri Belier had determined to go to bed early. When Gabrielle arrived he was in his bath. He lay in water which was perfumed and tinted pink by bath salts. The bath water soothed him, and he dabbled his fingers indolently to prevent himself from going to sleep in its warmth. A servant interrupted him. He told M. Henri Belier that an odd visitor had come who demanded that the State Prosecutor should see her at once. On hearing that the visitor was blind, M. Henri Belier received her in his blue bath robe. He stared in amazement. An angel stood before him.

You know what is written in the old book? The angel stayed the hand of Abraham when the knife was already raised. Angels have done many other unusual and miraculous things.

M. Henri Belier saw an angel before him, and the angel said:

"That man is innocent. You must not kill him. A stranger came to me to-day. He told me this. But I knew it before. He said also, 'No. 47 knows how he came by the eighty thousand.' Give the order at once that he should not be killed."

That is what M. Henri Belier heard. Did he immediately fly to the telephone? Did he begin to shiver at the thought that an innocent man might be killed? Not at all. Yawning lazily, he said, "This is very mysterious. What man? What does '47' mean? Is it the number of a house?"

And as Gabrielle could tell him nothing definite he decided that the blind girl was suffering from hallucinations. He answered politely, "Forgive me, madam, but I can do nothing in the matter." At the same time he rubbed his pink chest, which still smelt of lavender. That is how M. Henri Belier received the angel.

Now you understand for yourself that the old book should

be burned—burned at once, burned with its leather binding.

Gabrielle did not go away. She stood there softly crying. Silly Gabrielle. She had believed that she had only to come and say, "Stop," and an innocent man would be saved. M. Henri Belier was probably a great admirer of the old book, and he had been softened by his warm bath. He let his feelings get the better of him. A brilliant idea struck him. What if this blind girl were to go to the condemned man? The daughter of the victim beseeching the murderer to confess on the eve of his death? It would be a Christian act. The murderer would die with an easier conscience.

He would die at six o'clock. That was why M. Henri Belier must rise at five. He would not have enough sleep. It is cold in the morning, and what with the cold and insufficient sleep, M. Henri Belier would shiver and shake. And so, with Gabrielle's consent, he signed a permit for an interview. She must go at once to the Santé Prison. It was high time for M. Henri Belier to be in bed.

Silence reigned in the Fourth Wing, as usual. No sounds from outside reach it, and the prisoners were not aware that at the prison gates in the Rue Santé the "widow" was being erected. Andrew was not aware, but he did know that the end was very, very near. It was with hope rather than despair that he thought of the end. He realized that he would never see Jeanne. But in these last days he had been full of her. Her face, her eyes, her voice, her breath, filled the cell. It was not delirium, it was victory. In the heart of the Fourth Wing, in spite of all the Governor's efforts, something strange was happening, lovers were talking to one another day and night. They confided their most secret thoughts to one another. They eagerly recalled the smallest details. The warders who watched Andrew through the spy hole had no idea of that, and seeing that the man sat motionless the whole day long with his eyes staring fixedly at one spot,

and smiled without any cause, they thought he was going mad. They even informed the Governor of their opinion. The conscientious Governor at once sent the doctor to the condemned man. The doctor felt his pulse and told him to let him look at his tongue and reassured the Governor: nothing serious, he would last till the execution.

There was only one thought that at times saddened Andrew. Was he at that moment living in Jeanne as Jeanne was living in him? Was she conscious of his love? The comrades would read what he had said at the trial and would know that he had died as a Communist should die. But Jeanne? He had not been able to speak of her. Would she understand what love meant for him? Andrew strained every nerve to communicate with her. He absorbed her in himself. He lost himself in her. What nights! What silence! The motionless man would suddenly smile, and the superstitious warders were frightened. They did not know that Andrew was talking to Jeanne. But they did know that the "widow" was being set up at the prison gate and that this was the man for whom the terrible "widow" was waiting.

It was nearly midnight when Gabrielle was led into Andrew's cell. She did not see that this was a prison, the terrible Fourth Wing. To her the whole world was a prison. She fixed her unseeing eyes on Andrew. Tears fell from them; she could do nothing to help him. But her lips smiled. It was the smile with which one human grief greeted another.

Gabrielle was silent. She did not know what to say. She did not even know in whose presence she was. She was smiling not at a man but at grief. Andrew began to speak. There was so much that he wanted to say. He knew who the blind girl was. But the Governor of the prison was in the cell and he had to consider every word. He spoke slowly and softly as though to a child.

"You remember how you went to call on happiness? You

did not go alone. Do not speak her name. It must not be spoken here. But you will find her. Tell her that you visited me not long before my death. Tell her that I smiled. You cannot see me, but you must take my word for it—I am smiling at this moment. Tell her that in this cell she was with me the whole time. Tell her that I remember the black-birds in the Luxembourg Garden. They whistled so gayly there; but I can hear them here. Tell her that I have forgotten nothing. The warders were alarmed because I smiled. The doctor felt my pulse. He asked me anxiously why I was smiling instead of weeping. They thought that I was mad. Tell her that it was because of my love. My love alone gave me strength. There is neither fear nor anger in me now. Tell her—but let no one know her name—tell her that I, too, called on happiness, and that I was as happy as a man can be. Tell her that I loved her.”

These were not mere words. This was no ordinary interview. The Governor of the prison drew back in alarm. He saw that this man was not lying: this man who was to be beheaded in a few hours was really smiling while he said these senseless things. He saw that the blind girl answered him with a smile, weeping as she smiled. They were both mad. And forgetting his own rules about absolute silence in the Fourth Wing the Governor cried, “Enough! I can listen to no more of this.”

Gabrielle had fallen to her knees before Andrew and was kissing his hands. The blind girl had not been born in vain, she had not lived in vain. She saw now the meaning of love. She saw what man lives by.

## XLV

### *He Went Straight to Jeanne*

JUST before dawn Andrew fell into a doze. He was sitting on his bunk with his head in his hands. He was having a strange dream in which there were no people, no sounds; it was a bare, silent, weird dream. It consisted of a scent, a thick, heavy scent which penetrated Andrew's being. It was the bitter-sweet scent of dry yellow flowers which blossom far from Paris on the red rocks of San Rafael and at the foot of the Pyrenees. It was the scent of Jeanne's favorite flowers, the warm scent of mimosa, the scent of that night in the hotel in the Rue Odessa, and in his sleep Andrew smiled like a child at that scent.

"See, he's smiling," whispered one warder to another. "He's gone mad, this number, that's what he's done. You think in an hour and a quarter they'll come for him?"

"An hour and ten minutes. There's a crowd outside as big as on the Fourteenth of July. They say that all the balconies in the neighboring house are let. Anybody that comes along now won't get farther than the Denfert-Rochereau Square. It's all due to the weather."

"Just look how he's smiling. Quite mad. Perhaps he's dreaming that he's been pardoned."

But Andrew was dreaming only of a scent, the delicate, sad scent of Southern flowers, and he smiled, and continued to smile, until his shoulder was touched by the somewhat tremulous hand of the Governor.

"Wake up, my friend."



The Governor was always polite to prisoners before their execution. He did not wish to harden their hearts at the last moment. Besides, he remembered the night scene in the cell. The man was mad without a doubt. And one must be particularly polite to the insane. That is why the Governor had not allowed a warder to approach the sleeping criminal and had preferred to waken him with special care.

Andrew sprang up. He did not at first understand what was happening. In place of silent darkness and the smell of mimosa he saw before him several strangers. The cold light of the electric lamp hurt his eyes. He took a few uncertain steps. The strangers edged carefully toward the door. They did not know of what this madman who had nothing to lose might be capable. Sometimes condemned men made senseless efforts to escape; sometimes they attacked the warders. Safety first.

Who are these strangers who have got up so early to come to the dark cell in the Fourth Wing? The Governor of the prison, the State Prosecutor, M. Henri Belier, the prison doctor, Felix, the one-eyed prison barber, and last but by no means least, the principal hero of the impending proceedings, the tall and elegant M. François Botan, who proudly claims the old-time title of "Chief Master Craftsman of Paris."

France is a highly cultured country in which all professions are honored. M. François Botan was no Crooked Simon; he was not even a common executioner. He was the "Chief Master Craftsman of Paris," an expert and the keeper of the iron "widow." His portrait is to be found in all newspapers. He is an esteemed visitor at charity performances. He is an honored member of the Society for the Protection of Waifs and Strays. He is invited to the most aristocratic drawing rooms. He is well known, highly appreciated, and very much liked. He is a celebrated man. Marshal Foch is

a great soldier. Rostand is a great poet. M. François Botan is a great "widow" expert.

And, knowing this, M. François Botan carried himself as all great men do: he was amiably condescending, sometimes a little capricious, sometimes charming everyone with his unconstrained simplicity. He alone had made no movement to the door when Andrew had sprung up. He scorned danger. He coquetted with fearlessness like a toreador or a young tenor. He enjoyed these early risings, the cold dawn, the ceremonious operation, the respectful murmur of the crowd. He was in the best of tempers this morning because, owing to the fine weather, a huge crowd had assembled. He looked forward to a very effective scene. He whispered to the doctor with a smile, "He's a good specimen, very good. You know, Doctor, I recently had to play my part at Tours, and there I had . . ."

The doctor listened respectfully—indeed, with a certain amount of envy. He was a novice at this kind of thing, and to tell the truth, he felt wretched. Everything here struck him as unpleasant, the light, the suspicious conduct of the prisoner, even the executioner's smile. He thought of the warm bed from which he had been roused so early, of his wife Irene, rosy and sleepy in her striped pajamas, of the cozy warmth, the soft, dim light of his bedroom. Heaven knows why, but the doctor was on the verge of tears. He could not discuss with M. François Botan the beauty of the Tours specimen. He could barely stammer, "You must have devilish strong nerves."

M. François Botan answered contemptuously, "It is not nerves, Doctor. It is a thorough knowledge of my business. And also—also perhaps, talent. If you had seen that giant at Tours."

Andrew had long since realized why these people had come. He was calm. Indeed he was happy, as he had been

for the last few days. The doctor looked at his face in vain for any trace of fear or despair. Andrew calmly signed a paper concerning the disposal of his watch, which was in the prison office.

"I tell you he is mad," whispered the Governor to the doctor.

The moment had come for M. François Botan to display his virtuosity. With an exultant smile, never for a moment losing sight of the fact that this was a beautiful ceremony, he performed all the rites. He offered Andrew a cup of coffee and a cigarette. Andrew refused them. Thank you, he did not want either. Andrew was thinking, if only they would be quick. But M. François Botan liked to prolong his enjoyment. It takes three seconds to sever the head, but the ceremonial must last at least an hour. At last he turned to the one-eyed Felix.

"You had better begin the toilet of the criminal."

Felix untied a bundle and produced his implements: a comb, scissors, and a hair clipper. Although he was the Santé Prison barber, he was still a barber and possessed of all the politeness for which his profession is famous. Combing Andrew's hair, he murmured, "You have very tough hair, sir, the machine won't cut it. Will you kindly bend your head a little? A little more. That's right, thank you."

Andrew was now thinking of nothing. Vague and disconnected images floated before his mind's eye: the summer-house in the Tsaritsin Park, the rumble of the train, the scent of mimosa, his dream, Jeanne. He did not even understand what they were doing to him. Perhaps this was the execution. How quaintly Jeanne rolled her r's. Dear Jeanne.

Felix finished his work and screwed up his only eye. It was all right, the toilet of the criminal was complete. Then a newcomer appeared from the corridor. This was the abbé

with a flabby effeminate face like a nicely browned pancake. How could a devotee of the old leather-bound book refrain from hastening to the spot where its laws were being so flagrantly violated!

"My child, in a few minutes you will lose your life. The worldly powers have condemned your body. But I am heedful of your soul. Make its passage into another world easy by repentance and by partaking of the holy sacrament."

The abbé had both the old book and the tabernacle in his bag. So that was why he had come. He was not opposed to the cutting off of heads. He only wanted the cutting to be accompanied by texts from the old book. Andrew declined, as he had declined M. François Botan's offer of a cigarette.

"Thank you, but I am a Communist."

M. François Botan then gave the word:

"So, all is in order. It is time to move on."

Andrew rose, but he fell back upon his stool. He fell back, heavily, stupidly, like a sack. Something terrible was happening within him. It began with his legs, which refused to move. Then it rose slowly to his head. When it got to his heart it burst into a fearful agitation. At last it reached his consciousness. He understood. To live! Only to live! A day! An hour! Ten minutes! When men feel that they usually cry aloud and fling themselves about. Jules Lebeau had groaned at the open window. Andrew fell on his stool. He could not move. He wanted to live. He was so young. His heart was not worn out, it did not want to stop. It was beating more and more fiercely. In a moment Andrew would scream—a terrible scream. Or he would fling himself on the Governor, who stood near him. Or he would weep. He would resist. He would thrust aside the warders, he would rush to the door. He could not die. Do you hear? Andrew could not die.

He sat there, he did not move, he was silent. It all lasted

only a minute or two. M. François Botan waited patiently, glancing at his gold watch. He had allowed for complications and had five minutes in reserve.

The least interested of the spectators was the State Prosecutor, M. Henri Belier, who was standing in a corner of the cell. He had got up early and had not had enough sleep. He was annoyed with life. But suddenly a bright idea struck him. He imparted it to the doctor, who was still trembling.

"Do you know what? When this is over let's go to the morning races at Neuilly. They've got some very interesting entries there. Now that we are up so early we might as well make the most of it. Last time I backed a horse—not the favorite, it's true—but I got . . ."

But the doctor had no use for favorites. Horrified, he could not remove his eyes from the condemned man, who still sat motionless. He answered the State Prosecutor with the words which he had used to the "Chief Master Craftsman of Paris":

"You—you must have devilish strong nerves."

Andrew was thinking of nothing. His legs thought for him. They rose. They rose of their own accord. Andrew took one step, then another. He was already in the corridor, the long, dark corridor. At the end of it he could see a light, the bright light of day.

He was overcome by a new feeling. The light, his dream, the scent of mimosa, his hazy but vivid memories, all merged into one great joy. At the end of the corridor was Jeanne. It was not the hope of seeing her eyes in the crowd. His joy was beyond the bounds of reason. Perhaps they were right when they said that he was mad. It was the death agony of his soul, its last quest, and that was happiness, happiness. He was going straight to Jeanne. In the silence of the Fourth Wing his footsteps resounded joyously.



## XLVI

### *What Even the Policeman's Eyes Could Not Endure*

THE train from Cologne arrived at ten minutes to seven. Jeanne took a taxi and drove as far as the corner of the Boulevard Arago and the Rue Glacière. The crowd there was so great that the taxi could get no further. Pushing her way through groups of idlers, Jeanne continued on foot. She did not know why there were so many people; she did not even think about it. She ran.

It was a beautiful summer morning. As though at a fair, mothers had bought their children bright red or green balloons which were straining skyward. Vendors of peanuts or nougat noisily cried the merits of their wares. Boys were offering coconut milk at two sous a glass. Someone was singing a pretty song about the beauties of Marion. The crowd which had gathered from the twenty arrondissements of Paris was bent on amusing itself: it took whatever offered. Life is not always sad; now and then one has a gay time.

Jeanne ran. She did not know why these people were so gay. She was not thinking about that. But she ran, pushing forward through the press with difficulty. At last she reached the corner of the Rue Santé.

What happened next? It is terrible to relate. Had not efforts been made to save Andrew? Had not Aglaia given her baby's portrait to the cruel Uk-Zabotko? Had not Pierre Pouatras beaten his head against the door of his cell? Had not blind Gabrielle gone out into the night alone? Yes; all that had happened. And then there had been the quiet room

in Madame Lopke's respectable boarding house. Had Jeanne's love not been great enough? No love could be greater. What was it then that happened? It is impossible to find courage to tell. Oh, if only this were not real life. If only it were one of Charles Dickens's charming novels, how glad everyone would be! The public would have wept when the unhappy Aglaia appeared in court. The Prosecutor would have run after Gabrielle. Eugène Pettefaure would have done two kind actions, if not three. And Halibieff, the terrible Halibieff, on hearing Jeanne's prayer, would of course have been touched, would have gone to Paris and saved Andrew. Then they would all have met in a large room with a round lamp and clapped their hands for joy. Jeanne would have thrown her arms round Andrew; she would have seen again his broad, kind smile. They would have said to Halibieff, "You did an evil deed, but we have no desire to punish you. Let your punishment be the happiness of those you sought to ruin." Yes, if it had been a Dickens novel, that is exactly what they would have said. But it was life.

At the corner of the Rue Santé, where the prison walls rise black and gloomy, Jeanne heard from the thinning crowd a familiar snuffling voice:

"Ah, so you have just arrived, Mademoiselle Jeanne? What a pity you were late. It was really a beautiful ceremony. I had waited all night, and I was not a dozen yards from the 'widow.' I saw perfectly when M. François Botan lifted up the head."

After which Rotten-nose, radiant with joy over having witnessed such a scene, politely raised his greasy bowler and hurried off to business.

The throng dispersed. The street vendors took their packs to other, more frequented thoroughfares. The Boulevard once again became a quiet, sleepy street, filled with the

rustle of leaves and the laughter of school children. Only the empty nutshells and the cigarette ends recalled the fact that early in the morning it had been the scene of a merry gathering.

Shops were being opened. A heavy van thundered past. The sun grew hot. A smell of cooking rose from the houses. Somebody was beating a dog—the dog howled. Chairs and wardrobes were being piled onto a cart: someone was moving. Hours passed. Then the newspaper boys began to cry the evening papers. The papers announced that there had been another sensational murder. The heat grew less. Sun blinds were being raised. Workmen were wending their way homeward. Then a green light shone over the entrance to a little cinema. On the screen there a man was smashing crockery as he did every evening. The spectators ate peanuts and laughed. On a bench opposite the prison, where it was particularly dark and lonely, lovers were kissing. Another day had gone by.

A policeman, a perfectly ordinary policeman with a mustache and a blue kepi, was strolling up the Boulevard Arago. He was there to see that order reigned, and order was reigning everywhere. At six o'clock a man's head had been cut off. At twelve the employees had gone to lunch, at seven the shops had closed. The policeman liked order. The only thing that somewhat perturbed him was a young woman who was sitting on the pavement at the foot of the prison wall. At first the policeman had taken her for a shopgirl resting in the shade of the chestnut tree. But when he passed the prison again two hours later she was still in the same place. He frowned but passed on. Although a bench is the proper place to sit, the policeman did not consider that the woman's conduct was actually a violation of law and order.

But when night fell, when even the lovers who had been kissing in the dark had gone away, when no one re-

mained in the boulevard under the big shining stars except the policeman, and when he saw the woman still sitting motionless against the prison wall, this custodian of law and order grew angry. Twisting his mustache, he went up to her resolutely. He meant to tell her, and to tell her sternly, that sitting on the pavement after nightfall was indecent, was indeed an offence. He went right up to her, but the woman did not move. She took no notice of him. The policeman bent down and looked into her eyes, her big, dark eyes.

He said nothing to her. Indeed he started back and quickly walked away. In her eyes he had seen that which human eyes cannot endure—not even the eyes of a policeman who is used to everything.

## XLVII

### *The Stars Bore Witness*

MANY days went by. Four months passed. The trees in the Boulevard Arago were bare. It was autumn. At night the wheeling stars in the enormous black dome of heaven shed their light on an attic window. There was plenty of black night and there were many stars in the garret of which the chauffeur Pierre Pouatras was the tenant. Jeanne Ney was lying under the stars, beneath the square window which looked straight up to the sky.

On the morning of his release from prison Pierre had seen the woman who was still sitting motionless on the pavement. He took her home with him. Jeanne had said nothing: she was ill. The doctor had advised sending her to a hospital. There were nurses there. But could not the chauffeur Pouatras nurse her? When he went to work his place was taken by little Lisette. Jeanne's illness was long and painful. A nervous fever was followed by inflammation of the lungs. She was often delirious. It seemed obvious that the frail body could not endure those nights and that Jeanne would die. The doctor said so. But she did not die, perhaps because, in her rare lucid intervals, she wanted to die and called Death.

Pierre Pouatras tended her, and he did it better than any nurse. This jolly, care-free chauffeur could be very tender, very quiet and serious. He laid cold towels on Jeanne's burning brow, and fearing that their weight might be too much for her he would hold up the ends. When he saw that



Jeanne was slowly getting better he rejoiced within himself and smiled at the bright stars through the skylight. Jeanne's temperature became normal. She now ate and slept. But she was silent. It was only by a tremendous effort that she answered Pouatras's questions. The doctor, talking learnedly of apathy, prescribed a new medicine. It did not help. Of what avail was medicine against that which man had done? Jeanne did not wish to live, Jeanne could not live. It would have been useless to call in all the professors of Paris.

On a clear October day, when the air was so invigorating that one wanted to walk, to sing, to work, and, above all, to live, Pouatras made up his mind to try a last remedy. It was a remedy resembling those medicine bottles that a chemist labels "poison" and keeps in a special cupboard. It might kill Jeanne there and then, or it might cure her. Pouatras decided to try, and one evening he brought Gabrielle to the attic.

It had not been an easy matter. Gabrielle had been Madame Poux for some time; that is, she was the wife of Gaston. Rotten-nose kept her shut up under lock and key. He would, of course, never have allowed her to go to Jeanne. Pouatras had to keep watch at the black gates in the Rue Thiboumery for a long time. And when Rotten-nose had gone out to play billiards with the piano tuner he hastily brought Gabrielle.

Gabrielle had suffered greatly during the last months. It is said that angels can bear anything. But just imagine what it must be for an angel to be Gaston's wife. Gabrielle had experienced M. Raymond Ney's snails and Halibieff's wet hands, yet Rotten-nose nevertheless succeeded in astonishing her.

But, in the midst of her silent tears, in her unending night, in that accursed labyrinth, Gabrielle would begin to smile. It was the same smile that had once so frightened the

Governor of the Santé Prison. She was recalling the words which the man had spoken. Indeed, one might say with truth that she constantly bore them in mind. They had been a revelation to her.

Now, hearing Jeanne's familiar breathing, she was to repeat them aloud. She was agitated. It was well that her eyes were not like those of others, well that she could not see Jeanne. Instead of the bright girl from Loirette, so rich in songs and wine and wisteria, there lay on the bed a sick woman so thin, so translucent that she could be compared only to the leafless trees of the Boulevard Arago, sightless, voiceless, lifeless—not a woman but a shadow. Gabrielle could not see that, she heard only the familiar breathing. The poor blind girl was very much wrought up. She found it very difficult to say aloud the words which filled the silence of her night in the Rue Thiboumery.

She spoke. Jeanne listened, raising herself from her bed, as though striving to rise higher and higher, to reach the very stars shining above her. And with every word life poured into Jeanne, a new life, a great life, such life as is unknown to State Prosecutors and examining magistrates and all other clever, self-complacent and happy persons. Jules Lebeau had glimpsed that life for the first time just before he died, and after that he had not wanted to die. Jeanne was reviving. Those words accomplished what all the medicines in the world were powerless to effect. Jeanne was not returning to life, she was being reborn to another existence as yet unknown to her. She had had a premonition of it in Moscow, at the station, when she had wanted to embrace everyone—Nicholas Ilyitch and Zaharkevitch and the big alien city, when her heart had lost its accustomed rhythm and found new harmonies, when that little heart had expanded to bursting point and ached so insufferably. But that had been only a premonition; that moment had seemed a mere

accident, a happy incident among petty joys and cares. Now she was filled with that new life that Andrew had given her. That new life must be called love.

Jeanne and Andrew had often spoken the word love. They had used it tenderly, purely. The word which at the Gaverni Bar or at the "My-Boy" dancing hall was like a dirty bank note had been on their lips a warm, dry, yellow flower. But when, at the point of death, Andrew had once more repeated the word, he had put into it a new power, a new meaning. The word had grown until it was as big as the world. And with that word was Jeanne made whole.

Andrew was not dead. Love was not dead. It had grown as Jeanne had grown—Jeanne, of whom all had thought of as a simple little girl, but who now looked at everyone with the limpid eyes of a martyr and a heroine.

Gabrielle talked on. She repeated each one of Andrew's words many times, as though wishing to give it strength to live and breathe independently. In the bare attic, she touched Jeanne's face with her fingers to make sure that every word reached her. And suddenly she stopped.

"Cousin, he smiled. I saw it, Cousin."

It was for the first time in her life that Gabrielle used the word "saw." She was not lying. Man does not see with his eyes only.

"I saw him smiling. I saw it, Cousin. But you—you have wet cheeks, you are weeping."

"No, Gabrielle, I too am smiling."

The Governor of the prison was not in the attic. Neither was Pouatras. He was waiting on the stairs outside. Only the stars the watchful autumn stars can bear witness to the truth of Jeanne's words.

The stars could see her tears—heavy, human tears—and it is quite natural that they should, for does not everyone weep under the stars of autumn or of spring, when his be-

loved ones are taken from him! But stars can see smiles, too. Jeanne was telling the truth. She was smiling. And that must have surprised even the stars.

Jeanne was with Andrew in the Fourth Wing. Jeanne was with him, awaiting execution. She accepted death. She took it to herself. She smiled, not at Andrew but with him, smiled at love, at that tremendous, mad love which was her second life, which easily and simply stepped over death as over the threshold of a prison cell, that rare, that blinding love which was shining in the lights of heaven, and in that little morsel of life, in the blood and in the eyes of that human being, that woman, Jeanne Ney.

## XLVIII

### *The Second Life*

IT WAS a cold, dark October morning. At the corner of Kleindorf Street, a dirty, neglected thoroughfare in the northern quarter of Berlin, there was a long queue standing. Women, working women or the wives of petty underlings, were waiting to get milk for their children. It was the hungry, poverty-stricken, terrible Berlin of the end of 1923. There was a cruel wind. It rushed down the streets like a cold blast, and at the corners it whirled scraps of paper and raised columns of biting dust. The women had been waiting a long time, an hour, two hours, clutching their jugs or bottles in their numbed fingers. They wanted to get a little skimmed milk of a bluish tint like the color of their own faces.

Near the women, but not actually in the queue, stood a tall man who looked like a beggar. He was dirty. His coat was torn. He had no overcoat. He was unshaved, neglected, like this Kleindorf Street. He looked very stout, but it was an unhealthy corpulence. He was swollen and green and resembled a flabby sack into which liquid had been poured. He too was shivering with cold, tortured by the sharp wind. He was not waiting for milk. He was waiting for something different. It was Halibieff.

Much time had elapsed since he had slaked his obsession in Madame Lopke's respectable boarding house. Much had changed since then. Halibieff had experienced bad luck before, yet what had befallen him that summer had been not



bad luck but catastrophe. Halibieff had lost the remainder of his money on the stock exchange. That, however, was not the point. Could he not earn more? Of course he could. Only to do that he would have to remain the old Halibieff, and he had been destroyed. He was like a corpse wandering about the dark streets of Berlin. His fear had increased until it was now nothing less than insanity. If he caught sight of himself in a shop-window mirror he rushed away. He was afraid even of himself. If a stick fell to the pavement he thought that it was a severed head falling. He could not forget the night in Madame Lopke's boarding house. He raved about the brunette. His obsession had become insanity. Thinking of her, he shed loathsome, inane tears, and his bouts of weeping always ended in hiccoughs. He felt certain that sooner or later the brunette would find him—that that would be the end. He would take leave of his head, stroking his thin hair in despair. He had gone through every degree of poverty, even to sleeping in the street, even to stealing from a barrow. Added to that, he had become ill. He did not know what was the matter, and there was no question of going to a doctor. He was swollen so that he could hardly move, the pain in his back was intolerable. He felt that he would soon die, but he wanted to live. Like all living creatures, he wished to live. He rubbed his back carefully, and he wept and wept until he was sick.

At an emigrants' doss house, where he was passing the night, he had met a beggar. The man had offered him some liver sausage, they began to talk, they became friends. The beggar had made a certain suggestion, and Halibieff had not been in a position to turn it down or even to take time to think about it. They would cut off his head soon, anyhow. He received a little money in advance, and drank it all away in a dirty beer house with a prostitute named Frieda, ill tempered and covered with pimples worthy of Chichi. He

was less exacting now. He even kissed Frieda. He was going to have big money, fifty dollars, in fact: not now, but when he had done the job.

That was why he was standing opposite No. 61. He was shadowing a certain important Bolshevik whom he had undertaken to kill. He tramped the streets. He hung about doorways. He did it all automatically, without will power or interest. He was trembling now, trembling with cold and fear. He looked enviously at the women near him: they had homes, children, life. He had nothing, but he clung stupidly to his miserable existence. At that moment he wanted above all things to lie down, to lie down on the pavement, his back ached so. He went on waiting. When would that man come out? If only he could get a little warmer.

He did not know that at that moment the person he feared more than anyone in the world was in No. 61. He had come here straight from the doss house at nine o'clock, and at half-past eight Jeanne had entered that house. Jeanne had been directed to that same Bolshevik to give him particulars of Andrew's fate.

Jeanne was on her way to Moscow. She remembered the days she had spent there. She was taking her second life to the place where Andrew had lived, to Moscow, the foreign city that was her home.

They met in the wretched Kleindorf Street. Halibieff's swollen legs refused to serve him; he wanted to run, but he fell. He lay on the pavement in convulsions. Jeanne stopped. She looked at the terrible swollen face. Halibieff looked at her. He did not want to but he looked. It was she. In a moment they would seize him, carry him off, cut off his head. He writhed and groaned with fear.

But it had not been in vain that Jeanne had learned what love was. She felt no resentment. She felt that she lived. And when she saw that wretched man, wretched not because

of his rags or his illness or his fear, but because evil had turned his heart to ashes, Jeanne pitied him. She did not say it in words. Pity was in her eyes only. But Halibieff felt it. He writhed, he moaned, he was like a worm that is crushed.

"Do you know? Do you know what I did?"

It was not repentance. Some measure of inward love is needed for repentance, and Halibieff had no love. He had nothing but his obsession and his fear. Yes, he was giving himself away completely. They would kill him. He did not care, he could no longer be silent. It was not repentance. It was death made audible.

Jeanne replied simply and gently, "Yes, I know. I know everything."

Halibieff could say no more. He only groaned and writhed more and more convulsively.

One of the women standing in the queue shuddered as she saw that scene between the little foreign girl and the beggar in convulsions. A few drops of bluish milk were spilt on the pavement. The woman sighed aloud: "Say what you like, life is a hard thing."

Yes, hard. Jeanne Ney made no reply. She only looked at the woman, and in her eyes was her second life, harder than the first, a life of toil, of high endeavor, of love.



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